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#103

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ONSIND

CITY
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ONE PUNK'S
GUIDE TO
THE RAMONES

AT SURF 78



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RAZORCAKE is a magazine dedicated to DIY punk, independent culture, and amplifying unheard voices. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, we're sustained by subscriptions, donations, advertisements, and grants. We want to create something that people can be proud to be a part of. We feel when we work together, life is a little more bearable. On one side is a terrifying culture of manipulation, and on the other side are all of us.

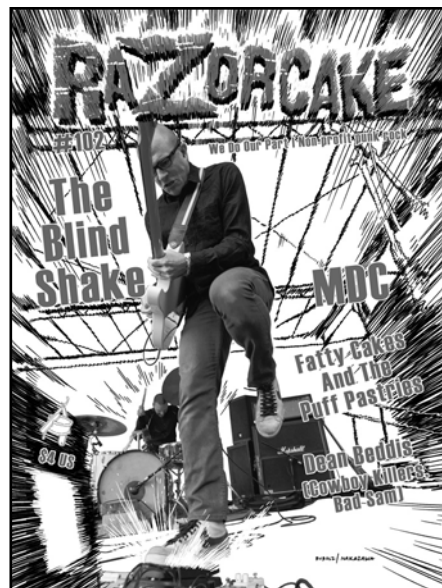
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**New Adventures
in the Sonic
Underground**



"Whoa, these spiel batches pack much punch and got their grip way into brain-frame! Faloon had me captured and I had to keep reading."

–Mike Watt,
Minutemen

MIKE FALLOON

Foreword by Joe McPhee
Photographs by Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh

The Other Night at Quinn's is a fascinating window into a community of creators surviving beyond the mainstream in an otherwise overlooked outpost of the cultural underground that cuts across distinctions of culture, gender, race, age, and genre.

Mike Watt of the **Minutemen** exclaims, “Whoa, these spiel batches pack much punch and got their grip way into brain-frame! Faloon had me captured and I had to keep reading.”

Wayne Kramer of the MC5 adds that it's "...a deeply personal dive into the psyche of a hardcore music fanatic...utterly indispensable. A truly great read."

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The Only Ones Who Can Truly Destroy Punk... Are the Punks Themselves

A One Punk's Guide to the Ramones? Really? One of the guiding principles of *Razorcake* is living in the now. I'm not nostalgic; I'm a historian. Even when we interview long-timers like Mike Watt, Alice Bag, and Phranc, we do so because they're active and relevant, not museum pieces.

It's undeniable the world has fundamentally changed in the past year and it's got me thinking of unassailable truths in punk culture, a culture that I've been a daily participant in since the late '80s. What comprises punk's structural integrity? What is punk's shared heritage? What are the irreplaceable elements of punk's core identity?

When I asked and re-asked Nørb to write a One Punk's Guide—the type of guide we've traditionally reserved for “not-punk-by-themselves” topics, like pinball, African politics, outlaw country, and gardening—he was reticent. He initially didn't jump at the opportunity. It was a radioactive potato. I knew it as much as he did.

You don't even have to like the Ramones' music—at all—but to deny the importance of their influence is to deny a fundamental building block of punk as-it-is. We all should be weary and angry about re-written histories. Histories of omission, redaction, and diminution, of others usurping true stories. Let's also be clear here. If you see anything Ramones-related (i.e. not a record) today, you can be damn sure the original Ramones aren't seeing that money. Their merchandising (like with Jim Henson's creations) mushroomed after their deaths.

Punk is my culture. (If you're reading *Razorcake*, I hope it's your culture, too.) It's worth taking a stand and fighting for. The Ramones created the foundation for the temple where many of us still find solace. It's not idolatry. I'm not saying you even have to respect the individual members of the Ramones, but recognize their cumulative

effect in history. The Ramones didn't appropriate an existing culture lock, stock, and barrel. They didn't stomp on others, steal their shit, then say they “discovered” something new. The Ramones changed a form of music forever, from how it looked, sounded, acted, and how it was made.

Think of any calendar. The numbers that indicate what today is, how many days after a paradigm shifted for a group of people to declare and recognize a day zero. “Today, massively important shit went down. We must remember this day. Start counting forward from this day.” I'm not going to get mired in what was the first punk band because that's just one element at play here.

The formation of the Ramones established the timeline separating proto-punk and post-punk as much as it separated punk from “non-punk” and “new wave.” The Ramones were amongst the first to self-identify as a punk band. They deeply influenced the quickly spawning architects of punk going forward—X-Ray Spex, Adverts, Slits, Eater, Generation X, Buzzcocks, Clash, Sex Pistols, Damned, Pretenders, and on and on and on.

In the cultural wasteland of music through the late '70s and early '80s, the Ramones planted the most punk seeds worldwide. They were often deeply personal, ostracizing seeds. Uncool seeds. Weirdo, pinhead seeds. Seeds that could get you beat up. Seeds in small-town, upper Midwest Nørb. Seeds in small-town Southwestern high desert Todd.

In this 2018 world where nothing is sure, where entire histories are being erased, we must reinforce our core reasons for existence. It's a question of priorities, the act of remembering and respecting, of protecting our creative resources. And in this issue it's something as serious and silly as the Ramones. *Razorcake* wouldn't have been possible without them setting the shape of punk to come.

—Todd Taylor

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**“What is realistic
is what happens.
The moment we
make it happen,
it becomes
realistic.”**

—George Monbiot
Manifesto for a New World Order

**Spippy
in a RZC
donation
bandana**



photo by
Michael T. Fournier

THANK YOU: “On Friday night we played a hundred-year-old Miner’s Hall in Durham called Redhills. Daniel’s grandfather was a coal miner, and my parents were both involved in solidarity work during the miners strike. We’ve both lived our whole lives in the shadow of the ‘84/’85 strike, so it felt very cosmic to play a show in that hall.” —Nathan Stephens-Griffin, *ONSIND*. (See the photo on p.59.) Thanks to Marcos Siref for taking the spirit of the banner the band is playing under for this issue’s cover; You can’t kill what’s already dead, but you can make it look fucking awesome thanks to Bone Dust for Donna’s illo.; Tales left untold by ghosts thanks to Bill Pinkel for Jim’s illo.; Clown trigger warning on pg. 12 thanks to Amina Cruz; Is pg. 17 a Milo/Nørb super-hybrid? Thanks, Codey Richards; Popsicles on barn floors thanks to Simon Sotelo for J.V. McDonough’s illo.; Post office-processed, Puro Pinche collage art thanks to Sean Dunne; Shooting pool on the honor system thanks to Kasia Onisczczuk for the Chicken’s photo; Here’s to hoping for book-induced paper cuts and concussions thanks to Shane Milner for Dale’s illo. (It’s so rad Stryper got back together... for another generation of punks to relentlessly mock them); “I felt like I built furniture with my bare hands. It exorcises your demons,” distills DIY punk to such a powerful point thanks to Emma Johnson, Brian H. Melnick, Kelly Sullivan, Wayne Lawton, Lorien Smith, and Lauren Denitzio for the City Mouse interview, photos, and layout; Richard Simmons idolatry converted to misfits-friendly, fiercely noncompetitive dance aerobics class thanks to Bianca, Scott Stuckey, Zohn Mandel, and Dylan Davis for the Pony Sweat interview, photos, and layout; An ideological worldview underpinned by ideals of equality, virtue, and liberation thanks to David Littlefair, Andy Dowson, Carl Farrugia, Sandy Gill, Suzy Harrison, and Nathan Stephens-Griffin, and Eric Baskauskas for the *ONSIND* interview, photos, and layout; Read to the end and see that that Pinhead Einstein’s isn’t just a catchy title thanks to Nørb for the One Punk’s Guide to the Ramones and a Bagge/Holmstrom curtsy to Alex Barrett for the illos.

“Precise aggression. Mind Spiders have gone from contacting earth, to studying its behaviors, to assimilating us, to recreating us in their own image.” —Ty Stranglehold Mind Spiders, *Furies LP*. Thanks to 103’s rotation of zines, books, and music reviewers: Ryan Nichols, Sal Go, Sal Lucci, Kayla Greet, Tim Brooks, Mike Frame, Matt Werts, Chad Williams, Nørb, Paul J. Comeau, Ian Wise, Indiana Laub, Rich Cocksedge, Keith Rosson, Garrett Barnwell, Kurt Morris, Ty Stranglehold, Matt Seward, Candace Hansen, Art Ettinger, Sean Koepenick, Steve Adamyk, Sean Arenas, Simone Carter, Juan Espinosa, The Lord Kveldulfr, Lyle, Aphid Peewit, Matt Average, Theresa W, Nicole X, Cynthia Pinedo, Jimmy Alvarado, Billups Allen, Michelle Kirk, Chris Terry, Camille Reynolds, Jim Woster, Michael T. Fournier, Tricia Ramos, Iggy Nicklbottum, and Craven Rock.

DIY punk can’t be fully captured, understood, or expressed by men. If you’re a woman, womyn, girl, grrrl, transgender/agender/non-binary/genderqueer writer who’s knowledgeable about punk, punctual, and open to editorial processes, drop us a line about doing reviews, interviews, articles, or webcolumns for *Razorcake*. Diversity will only make us a better punk publication. Please help us out. (razorcake.org/contact)



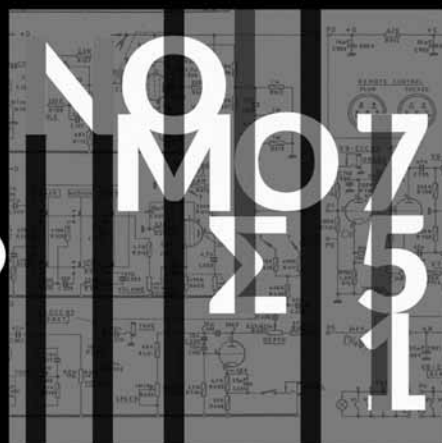
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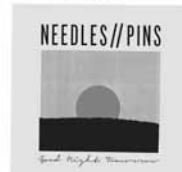
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The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is.

Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Kari Hamanaka, Rishbha Bhagi, Ever Velasquez, Nicole Macias, Donna Ramone, Matthew Hart, Derek "how is that guy evaluating those bananas? What does he know that I don't?" Whipple, Chris Baxter, Dayna Castillo, Steve Couch, Megan Pants, Marcos Siref, Candice Tobin, Griffin Wynne, Seth Swaaley, Sean Carswell, Felizon Vidad, Skinny Tan, Katy Spining, Jimmy Alvarado, Yvonne Drazan, Dale Drazan, Josh Rosa, Robert El Diablo, Mark McBride, Alice Bag, Marty Ploy, Rachel Murray Framingheddu, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Samantha McBride, Jason Willis, Janeth Galaviz, Matt Average, Joe Dana, Juan Espinosa, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Adrian Salas, Adrian Chi, Aaron Kovacs, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Nighthawk, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Jennifer Federico, Kevin Dunn, Maggie Egan, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Steve Thueson, Cassie J. Sneider, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Laura Collins, Eric Baskauskas, Bianca, Russ Van Cleave, John Di Marco, Michael T. Fournier, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, Timothee de Place, Bryan Static, John Miskelly, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Camille Reynolds, Becky Bennett, Craven Rock, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Chris Devlin, MP Johnson, Tim Brooks, Patrick Houdek, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Isaac Thotz, Kat Jetson, Noah Wolf, Jon Mule, Chris Terry, Jackie Rusted, Rosie Gonce, Rick V., Scotty McMaster, Rayne Blakeman, James KittleKamp, Jeff Khan, Punky Bowen, Sam Grinberg, Melanie Matranga, Elly Dallas, Ricky Vigil, Ollie Mikse, Art Fuentes, Mitch Clem, Dylan Davis, Becky Rodriguez, Keith Rosson, Megan Razzetti, Paul Silver, Matt Werts, Stacy Medina, David Ensminger, Danny Rust, Clara Acosta, Jamie L. Rotante, Daisy Noemi, George Lopez, Eden Kittiver, Shelby Fujioka, Jesse Zeroxed, Alice Elmer, Garrett Barnwell, Sal Go, Nørb, Chris Mason, Tim Jamison, Codey Richards, Amina Cruz, Kiyoshi Nakazawa, Nicole X, Shane Milner, James Rosario, Michelle Kirk, Rorey J. Sotela, Cynthia Guardado, and Josh Brown.

Individual opinions expressed within are not necessarily those of Razorcake/Gorsky Press, Inc.

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This issue is dedicated to the memories of
Peter Eichhorn, Ursula K. LeGuin, and Mike Carroll



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**You can't kill
what's already
dead.**

The Last Ride

When David Bowie died in 2016, friends of mine were so distraught they cried. It was a harsh death and people were moved to tears, despite not knowing him personally. I empathized with those in pain, but I can't say I felt the same. I had difficulty understanding that feeling. Crying over a celebrity, no matter how much influence or joy they may have brought me, just wasn't something I was ever emotionally moved to do. Then on April 2, 2017, I watched my hero die, and I finally got it. Honestly, it still hurts whenever I let my mind linger on it too long.

It's no secret I'm a lifelong fan of professional wrestling. As a small child in the 1980s, it was a huge part of children's entertainment. It was colorful, loud, over the top, and simple: bad guys were fighting good guys. And one wrestler was always my favorite. From *WWF Superstars* to *WCW Nitro* to every *Wrestlemania* event. From 1984 until 2017, nearly the entirety of my life, when he walked to the ring I stood up and cheered—even if it was alone, sitting on the couch. Sometimes he was a good guy, other times he was a bad guy. Most of the time, he was neither. He was alive, he was dead, and he was fucking awesome.

He was The Undertaker, and I loved him.

As my dad likes to point out, I have always liked all "the Halloween junk." I mail ordered a séance kit from a kids' book catalog when I was ten. Now imagine watching TV when you're an impressionable goth child. Suddenly, a funeral bell tolls and the screen goes dark. An unseen organ plays a dirge while a smoke machine stage left works overtime. The lights turn purple. Out of the shadows steps a massive silhouette. Silent as death, it moves slowly into the light, wearing a fashionable but imposing wide-brim hat and a scoop neck showing off some daring cleavage. A floor-length trench coat and level walk creates a levitating effect. All the while, an accompanying short, overweight man in pancake makeup is holding up a cheap urn, shaking and shrieking like a wounded raptor. Half ghost, half demon, The Undertaker would enter the ring, never say a word, roll his eyes back into his head, and end any opponent with a tombstone piledriver, pinning them for the three-count like he was putting their corpse in a pine box.

Mark Calaway played The Undertaker. He began wrestling in 1984 when he was nineteen. In 1990, he debuted as "Kane the Undertaker." In 1991, The Undertaker

won his match during *Wrestlemania*, which was the first of a twenty-one match streak literally called "The Streak," complete with its own Wikipedia entry. By 1994, he was firmly known as "The Phenom," hailing from Death Valley and choke slamming everyone. Paul Bearer was his cleverly named manager, and he came out with an urn that was magic and revived The Undertaker occasionally. The word often used to describe Paul Bearer is "histrionic," but somehow even that feels mild. He would shake violently without reason and manically scream, "Ohhh yes!"

By 2002, I had boxed up my wrestling memorabilia and stopped watching. As the years passed, I still thought about The Undertaker. I heard his appearances were slowing down but he came back each *Wrestlemania*, keeping The Streak going. I was watching old matches online when I decided to watch *Wrestlemania XXX*. It was 2014, and I knew it would be a five-hour nostalgia jerk-off made specifically for viewers who devotedly watched during the same decades I did.

Hulk Hogan, "Stone Cold" Steve Austin, and The Rock all came out together to kick off the event, and nearly every match was a veteran of the sport versus the newest superstars. My most anticipated match of the night was The Undertaker versus the popular MMA fighter-turned-wrestler Brock Lesnar. As soon as they started to make contact, I remember surprising myself with a gasp. Something was wrong. The match was awkward and slow, and The Undertaker wasn't looking great. He wasn't just looking older, he was looking like he should see a medical professional. But I and everyone else was waiting for Lesnar to lose to The Streak. Twenty minutes of lumbering blows and I still waited. The Undertaker would tombstone piledrive Lesnar one last time, cross his arms across his chest, and The Streak would continue. It had to.

Lesnar hit Undertaker with his signature F-5 move for the third time. The F-5 is impressive—Lesnar put the Undertaker on his shoulders, then spin drops him as Lesnar falls. But that was okay, it's the Undertaker. He'll kick out.

One.

He's the dead man. He always kicks out at two.

Two.

He'll come back from the dead and we'll all scream, here it comes.

Three.

The music didn't play Lesnar's theme right away and left all of us in silence, while the giant screen at the stadium just showed the numbers "21-1." It had been twenty-three years of this one solid thing we could all count on. The sun rises in the east, spring follows winter, and the Undertaker wins his match at *Wrestlemania*. It was devastating. So much so, several devastated reaction GIFs were birthed from crowd shots during this moment. After the shock started to fade, Lesnar was booed as he left. The Undertaker eventually stood up and as he made his exit, he got a standing ovation.

We all knew what this moment meant, but I refused to accept what was clearly written on the wall.

I made my triumphant return back into wrestling after *Wrestlemania XXX*, and I went back to watching weekly. I had so many new personas to love, but it felt weird without The Undertaker. He never did promos and he never had surprise appearances anymore. Predictably, the weeks leading up to *Wrestlemania*, The Undertaker would return to the ring to taunt one of the current superstars then defeat them in the Super Bowl of sports entertainment. But something was clearly off. The matches were getting slower and the moves were getting sloppier. It hurt to even consider it, but everyone was speculating the dead man would soon return to Death Valley.

I made the mistake of going to a friend's party for *Wrestlemania XXXIII*. The Undertaker was going against Roman Reigns, a major superstar they were attempting to Hulk Hogan-ize, as the night's main event. The WWE had created bingo cards that my hosts printed out for us to have fun with. I noticed one square read "post-match retirement" and I nearly broke in the middle of their kitchen. I considered leaving. I was in a room with my partner, two friends, and four strangers—this is not ideal for a moment I knew would emotionally destroy me. But after a few minutes, I managed to talk myself into believing plenty of post-match retirements happen and this bingo sheet meant nothing.

After what felt like seventeen hours of matches, it was finally time for the main event. We had cheered and jeered all day so when the room went quiet, it felt



BONE DUST

The sun rises in the east, spring follows winter, and the Undertaker wins his match at Wrestlemania.

uncomfortable. Something was too wrong to ignore. The Undertaker couldn't physically take or give any moves. Multiple lifts were botched. At one point, the Undertaker was lying on his back and went to do his signature raising-the-dead sit-up and collapsed. That's when the first tear rolled down my cheek.

It was excruciating to watch someone so big and strong—bigger than life itself—be weak and hurt. This was my rock, my steadfast hero. No matter what changed in my life, I knew I could turn on the TV and cheer for my champion: a six-foot ten, 309-pound, undead man dressed in black and bathed in purple light. If I couldn't count on the Undertaker forever, I couldn't count on anything forever.

The Streak was doubly over, as he lost a second time. Roman Reigns exited quickly (and has been booed by crowds ever since). After losing, The Undertaker laid there in the ring for a long time. As the camera zoomed in on his face, about three more tears fell from my eyes.

He eventually got up, slowly, and moved with a limp and purpose. He carefully folded his signature trench coat, picked up his iconic

hat, and placed them, like the sacred items they are, in the middle of the ring. Though Reigns had won, the Undertaker's funeral dirge theme played loudly. He quietly stepped between the ropes, walked toward the crowd and kissed his wife—breaking character for the first time in his entire career. Seeing the Undertaker in that moment, as a man with a wife and hurt back, was too much. My entire face was wet and I had lost count of the tears.

He walked half way up the entrance ramp, raised one fist, and descended down through the ground, as if he was returning to the grave he originally rose from. The crowd chanted, "Thank you, 'Taker (clap, clap, clap clap)" for the entirety of his departure. "Thank you, 'Taker." I silently mouthed along. I couldn't actually form the words with the way I was crying.

His coat and hat stayed in the ring, untouched, even after the house lights went up and crews were tearing down the ring. It made sense. If you cleared his coat and hat, you acknowledged he was gone. As long as we ignored it, maybe he wouldn't leave. No one wants to throw away the belongings of

someone who's died. We want to believe they'll come back and things will return to the way they were. No one wants to say goodbye to anyone they love. They're our family, our partners, our Undertakers.

'Taker came back for the Raw 25 anniversary show recently, but it wasn't the same. The man who battled on behalf of the forces of the netherworld was gone. He's probably going to get inducted into the Hall of Fame this year. Mark Calaway will live his life doing non-wrestling things for a while, and I'll keep watching wrestling.

Seeing him retire wasn't just a goodbye to a favorite wrestler. It was a reminder that people get old and leave us, no matter how badly we want them to stay. He wasn't invincible, he wasn't immortal. At only fifty-two years, he was too old and too broken to wrestle. One day, everyone I know will be too old and too weak to do what they do. I will be too old and weak to do what I do. We all run our course, we all retire, we all die.

The Undertaker, however, can't die. You can't kill what's already dead.

—Donna Ramone



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

“What makes you so special?” he asked with a smile.

Home Movies: Ghosts of Brooklyn

I never feel closer to my cousin Mark than when I am in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

Bay Ridge is the southwestern tip of Brooklyn, where the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge crosses the Hudson River to Staten Island. It is the neighborhood where Mark grew up, nurtured his love of movies, and wrote his earliest stories.

You might know Bay Ridge as the setting of *Saturday Night Fever*, where young Tony Manero, the character played by John Travolta, launches his assault on disco dancing.

The movie was based on an article in *New York Magazine* by an Englishman named Nik Cohn, called the “The Tribal Rites of the New Saturday Night,” about a Bay Ridge clerk in a housewares store named Vincent who was also the best disco dancer in the city. Apparently, the story was a complete fabrication, but the movie it spawned, for better or worse, put Bay Ridge on the map.

At the height of the disco era, Mark worked at a Bay Ridge nightclub called Penthouse. Mark was no dancer, but he did meet his wife, Theresa, on the one and only night her friends were able to drag her out to a bar.

This neighborhood, which is a little more than two square miles, lives large in my imagination because it is where my mother was born and raised. My earliest memories of the place are clouded with her stories of attending Fort Hamilton High, hanging out at the Green Tea Room with her friends, and chasing after the boys on the corner who had pompadours and duck tails and sang in doo-wop bands.

My grandfather, William “Pinchy” Flanagan, was a bartender at a place on Third Avenue called Lynch’s and my mother’s stories about him involved all manner of shady characters who were connected to one organization or another. It was the kind of bar where cops and mobsters nodded at each other over beers. In my mind, Bay Ridge was *A Bronx Tale* meets Sha Na Na.

I remember coming to Bay Ridge to visit my Aunt Peg before she passed away. She was in the hospital and I had driven up from Falls Church, Va., with my mother. My mom had vanity plates on her Volvo that read BAY RIDGE. We pulled into the hospital parking lot where

the attendant jotted down my mother’s license plate.

“Bay Ridge? What makes you so special?” he asked with a smile.

That’s Bay Ridge in a nutshell: attitude without aggression where you always have to account for yourself. Walk into a bar wearing a Yankees hat and before you sit down you’re likely to get bombarded.

“That’s a nice hat. Where did you get that hat? The Yanks gonna be good this year, or what?”

It’s the “or what?” I find so arresting. On the surface of this test of allegiances is an invitation to disagree, but beneath that lurks a trace of menace, a readiness to deal with the situation if the two parties can’t get along.

*

When I visit Bay Ridge, I stay with Mark’s younger sister, Noreen, who owns the house her father was born in with her husband, Dennis, another Bay Ridge native with his own colorful history.

It’s a small, narrow house off 79th Street a few blocks up from Shore Road, a ten-minute walk from the subway stop on 77th Street that takes Brooklynites into the city on the R Train. The house is on a residential street with a small yard and a garage in the back but just two blocks from where my grandfather used to tend bar.

There’s a parlor, dining room, and kitchen on the ground floor, three bedrooms on the second floor and another one in the basement, which has its own kitchen and a separate entrance. I stay in the attic, where Noreen keeps many of her memories of her late brothers Mark and Steve.

The walls are crowded with photographs of Mark alone and with his siblings. There’s a painting of the monster from *Pumpkinhead*, the most well known of Mark’s films, which stirs not fear but nostalgia. There’s even a miniature laminated black and white movie poster from the release of *Neon Maniacs*, Mark’s first film.

It is a familiar room, a room not all that different from my own with weird knickknacks on shelves full of books and magazines. Many of these contain articles Mark wrote for various movie and monster magazines now mostly out of print, like *Millimeter* and *Fangoria*. This, too, feels familiar. It is a repository of ideas; mark’s

way of thinking through culture as he forged a path for his own work.

*

We are watching home movies from 1954. Mark is one-and-a-half. Noreen is just a few months old. They are happy babies, laughing and smiling, blissfully unaware.

The image quality is surprisingly good, but in those days there was no way for the filmmaker to know what he or she was recording. Occasionally the subject plunges into shadow as if to remind us that darkness is near. There is no sound, which is always strange, especially when so many people on the screen can no longer speak for themselves.

The first few scenes are outdoors and the narrow streets of Bay Ridge are clogged with sturdy automobiles as big as boats.

The action moves inside to a holiday party. There’s my grandfather, Pinchy, and my grandmother, Honey, who would both be dead in a few years, before my mother turned sixteen. It’s the first time I’ve seen moving images of them, these ghosts I never knew.

My ten-year-old mother takes center stage. She is dressed in a short blue dress and performs a tap dance routine to music we can’t hear. Then Aunt Peg, my mother’s older sister by twelve years, appears in the same blue dress. It is so short she can do little more than sway hypnotically. She resembles a serious-looking Audrey Hepburn if instead of acting she pursued a career as a bartender, waiting on men in hats in smoke-filled rooms.

It is a jarring thing, this montage of innocence and its absence, and I am relieved when the babies are back, waving at the camera, blowing kisses out of the past.

*

It is Super Bowl weekend. The Philadelphia Eagles have beaten the New England Patriots, something I don’t have particularly strong feelings about. We watched the game at Noreen’s house with Dennis and his friends, some of whom I have known for twenty years.

We are all Giants fans and I have a lot of experience in crashing their tailgate parties and Super Bowl bashes.



BILL PINKEL

It's the first time I've seen moving images of them, these ghosts I never knew.

One unforgettable Super Bowl weekend I accompanied the crew when they went to pick up several platters of chicken wings. They passed a joint around and it turned into an hour-long exegesis on the merits of the establishment's sauces.

The day after the big game I ask Dennis how he did. Dennis is the kind of guy who always has a little bit of action going. People like this, in my experience, love telling stories about their bets. The blowouts, the also-rans, the bad beats, and blown calls. High drama for a small-stakes bettor.

But not this time.

Dennis owns a bar supply business in Bay Ridge and has clients all over the borough. He has played in a high roller Super Bowl pool for a number of years. It works like this: You purchase a box on a 10 x 10 grid. One team is assigned the columns; the other is assigned the rows. When all 100 boxes are sold, each column

and row is randomly assigned a number between zero and nine. Each box has two numbers, one per team. If your numbers match the last numbers of the final score of the Super Bowl, you win.

In Dennis's pool, those who play every year keep the same box. The numbers change, but the box remains the same. When Dennis went in to pick up the sheets his name was in the wrong box. He pointed out the mistake and new sheets were issued. However, a lot of people had the wrong sheet. And wouldn't you know it, the numbers on the wrong sheet with Dennis's name in the wrong box won. Suddenly, everyone was under the impression Dennis had come into a lot of money, including Dennis's partners in the pool.

Now imagine this story told by a Brooklynite who has lived and worked in the same ten-block radius all his life and whose chief rhetorical device is repetition.

"He really put me in a situation with my partners. What if one of my partners was a tough guy? What do you think would happen in a situation like that?"

I wish Mark was alive to hear the story. He would have thoughts about this hypothetical tough guy. He would have all kinds of ideas on how the movie would unfold, depending on whether it was directed by Coppola, De Palma, or Scorsese.

Whether he was the kind of man who slammed his gun on the counter and demanded his money. Or if he was the quiet type who seethed with menace, the kind of guy who said, "Are you gonna make this right, or what?"

When my cousin passed away he was living thousands of miles away in Los Angeles and it saddens me to realize that we're never going to hear his Brooklyn tales.

—Jim Ruland

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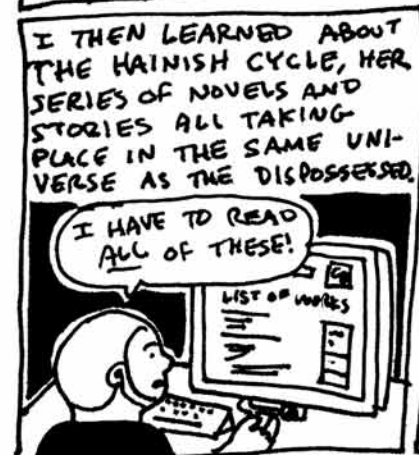
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DERP!

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THANKS ORANGE DOPE.



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NO, SERIOUSLY, ALL! (ONE PUNK'S INTERPRETATION OF THE CHALLENGING FOURTH DESCENDENTS ALBUM)

In 1949, mythologist Joseph Campbell published *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, a study of common plots found in what are broadly termed “hero myths.” Campbell’s observations were that our planet’s hero myths often shared a common plot template, irrespective of the culture, society, or nation in which they were conceived. Campbell’s main thrust of the common plot template, which he dubbed “The Monomyth”—also known as “The Hero’s Journey”—was this: “*A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won; the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.*” The Hero’s Journey is then broken down into three main acts—Departure, Initiation, and Return—and these acts are further subdivided into seventeen different stages. Hold that thought.

In 1987, the Descendents released *All*, their stupefyingly weird fourth album, approximately one-third of which was stone cold classics, one-third of which was puerile in-jokes set to music, and one-third of which was migraine-inducing, tempo-shifting wankery that seemed to hew to a vision whereby a band’s overall worthiness was primarily judged by how well they demonstrated the ability to start and stop together on unexpected notes at unexpected times. Despite believing about two-thirds of the album was a fucking train wreck, I listened to it repeatedly, searching for light in the darkness of insanity. Somewhere in the midst of the metal churnings and the switches to waltz tempo, a narrative began to emerge that ran throughout the album, a tale of a reluctant hero who seeks and eventually receives enlightenment, only to be driven slowly insane by his contemplation of the value of enlightenment in the everyday world. And, just in case you’ve spent the last thirty-one years wondering how this album and my interpretation of it fit into the framework of Campbell’s Monomyth, look no further: I offer enlightenment for pennies on the dollar.

DEPARTURE

The Call to Adventure: “All”

The hero begins in a situation from which some information is received that acts as a call to head off into the unknown.

The album’s one-second, one-note, one-word title track is a rousing call to the protagonist to throw off the shackles of his dopey existence, and join the band on the road, where they intend to relentlessly pursue ultimate greatness—aka “All”—with missionary zeal. Okay, maybe I’m reading a *little* bit into a one-second song, but rock’n’roll is kind of a subjective medium, ain’t it?

Refusal of the Call: “Coolidge”

Often when the call is given, the future hero first refuses to heed it. This may be from a sense of duty or obligation, fear, insecurity, a sense of inadequacy, or any of a range of reasons that work to hold them in their current circumstances.

The guy’s buddies yell “ALL!” to summon him to ACTION, and *one second later* he is moping because he’s “not a cool guy anymore,” and how he lost a girl. The protagonist is ignoring the call to All because of self-doubt! *Well I never!*

The Call to Adventure, Part II: “No, All”

This is technically not a Monomyth stage, but I figure the guy’s buddies yell “ALL!” in the first song, he mopes around in the second song, then they yell “NO, ALL!” in the three-second-long third song and he gets off his ass and into the van.

Supernatural Aid: “Van”

Once the hero has committed to the quest, his guide and magical helper appears or becomes known. More often than not, this supernatural mentor will present the hero with one or more talismans or artifacts that will aid him later in his quest.

In the first Star Wars movie, it’s Obi-Wan Kenobi. In the second, it’s Yoda. Here, it’s ye olde Dodge Econoline—magical helper and talisman, all in one.

Crossing the First Threshold: Also “Van”

This is the point where the person actually crosses into the field of adventure, leaving the known limits of their world and venturing into an unknown and dangerous realm where the rules and limits are unknown.

“Van” is a completely ridiculous song, detailing the many idiotic things the protagonist can do in the van: “Here in my van / I can beat my small cock / Fart on your

face / Sleep on a loaf” (for the uninitiated, a “loaf,” in Descendents parlance, is a large bundle of T-shirts). Be that as it may, entering the van clearly signals the start of the quest.

Belly of the Whale: Again, “Van”

The belly of the whale represents the final separation from the hero’s known world and self. By entering this stage, the person shows willingness to undergo a metamorphosis.

The precise moment in this song when the hero is in the “belly of the whale” is when he says he falls asleep and wakes up in another place, and a voice asks “where are we?” So, yes: “Van” comprises three stages of the Monomyth by itself. That’s why we don’t take the van’s name in vain.

INITIATION

The Road of Trials:

“Cameage,” “Impressions,” “Iceman”

The Road of Trials is a series of tests that the person must undergo to begin the transformation. Often the person fails one or more of these tests, which often occur in threes.

“Road of Trials” is an apt name; most of these songs were trying as hell to sit through the first twenty times I listened to them. “Cameage” is often interpreted by the unillustrious as a standard love song—and, indeed, the middle chunk of the song is little but a profession of undying love. It should not go unnoticed, however, that the song’s opening line is “I’m sick and I need a friend”—by the protagonist’s own admission, he is in the Friend Zone, not a lover. I see this as the hero losing faith that his Quest for All has any real meaning, and filling this void by imagining the one thing in his life that is true and real and meaningful is his love for this girl (maybe the same girl from “Coolidge”), but he told us at the get-go they were just friends, hence his love for her is likely largely a figment of his own imagination (her love for him is almost certainly such a figment). The line “there’s no turning back from this one” provides critical ambiguity: No turning back from this love, or no turning back from *questing All*? Even the hero has no clue quite where his devotions lie, hence he fails the first test.

“Impressions”—a troubling blend of metal chug, surreal waltzes, and flamenco



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For the uninitiated, a “loaf,” in Descendents parlance, is a large bundle of T-shirts

guitar—sees the hero dreaming he’s living in an impressionist painting with his alleged love. He had gotten into the van because he imagined it would help him escape his mundane existence, but now that he’s in the van, he’s trying to escape by being in the painting. FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, STIMPY, LIVE IN THE MOMENT! “Iceman” is a metally song about some badass; I see it as being the third failed test: In “Cameage,” the hero thinks other things are more important than being in the band; in “Impressions,” the hero thinks that he’d rather be somewhere else than in the van with the band, and in “Iceman,” the hero thinks that other people are cooler than he is as he sits in the van with the band. *This ne’er-do-well has denied All thrice!*

Bonus Track: “Jealous of the World”

Today, if a CD comes with “bonus tracks,” they are just that—extra crap from here and there appended to the end of an album. In the benighted days of the ‘80s, however, record labels—even at the indie level—were doing their damndest to squish demand for expensive, unprofitable vinyl, and drive consumers to cheap, profitable cassettes and CDs. Ergo, they’d just lop a song or two off of the vinyl when it came out, and call the missing songs “bonus tracks” on the other formats; “minus tracks” would have been a more accurate appellation. “Jealous of the World” is such a song, left off the vinyl in hopes the format would wither and die. As such, I don’t directly link it to a stage of the Monomyth, but I see it as the payoff of the Road of Trials: As a result of the three failed

tests, the hero hates his chosen quest and wishes he was something—anything—else.

The Woman as Temptress: “Clean Sheets”

In this step, the hero faces those temptations, often of a physical or pleasurable nature, that may lead him or her to abandon or stray from their quest.

“Clean sheets mean a lot to a guy who sleeps on the floor,” quoth the hero, yet he turns back the covers at the object of his desire’s pad, only to find “those sheets are dirty!” This betrayal serves as the ultimate catalyst for the hero to renounce the outside world—a world of stupidity and betrayal and failure to do the laundry after emission-heavy sex—and finally embrace his Quest for All. This central confrontation and initiation also

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“Pep Talk” is the first point on the album where the hero is actually talking to someone else, as opposed to working through his own inner turmoil, carrying on an imaginary conversation in his head, or randomly yelling.

positions “Clean Sheets” as the Monomyth stage of **Atonement with the Father**, but things are getting a little gross and Catholic now so let’s just move on.

Apotheosis: “Pep Talk”

This is the point of realization in which a greater understanding is achieved. Armed with this new knowledge and perception, the hero is resolved and ready for the more difficult part of the adventure.

“Pep Talk” (“It’s not the end of the world since your baby left you!”) is arguably the greatest Descendents song of all time, spinning a high-octane mudslick of optimism in the face of the soul-crushing betrayal of “Clean Sheets,” and is the point in the story where the hero embraces his quest and finds his voice for the first time. He now realizes what he can do and what his purpose in life is: To communicate life experiences to others (ostensibly from the stage) and help other lost souls to find their way just as he found his. It should not be overlooked that “Pep Talk” is the first point on the album where the hero is actually talking to someone else, as opposed to working through his own inner turmoil, carrying on an imaginary conversation in his head, or randomly yelling. It is the high point of the album in real life and in the embedded narrative. So there.

The Ultimate Boon: “All-O-Gistics”

The ultimate boon is the achievement of the goal of the quest. It is what the person went on the journey to get. All the previous steps serve to prepare and purify the person for this step.

“All-O-Gistics” doubles down on the idiosyncratic weirdness of “Van,” offering a disjointed laundry list of the rules for achieving All, which serve as either a divine roadmap to glory and success or some goofy shit people thought up when they spent too much time together in a van. Either way, the protagonist claims he has now become all-ular, so who am I to be critical?

RETURN

Refusal of the Return: “Schizophrenia”

Having found bliss and enlightenment in the other world, the hero may not want to return to the ordinary world to bestow the boon onto his fellow man.

The Magic Flight: “Schizophrenia”

Sometimes the hero must escape with the boon; it can be just as adventurous and dangerous returning from the journey as it was to go on it.

Freedom to Live: “Schizophrenia”

Mastery leads to freedom from the fear of death, which in turn is the freedom to live. This is sometimes referred to as living in the moment, neither anticipating the future nor regretting the past.

The entirety of the third act is represented by “Schizophrenia,” an almost seven-minute-long swirl of lurching tempo changes and van-addled rambling, in which the protagonist—presumably driven nutty by fatigue, enlightenment, or some potent cocktail of the two—babbles about having invented the wheel, forks in the road, and going insane. The

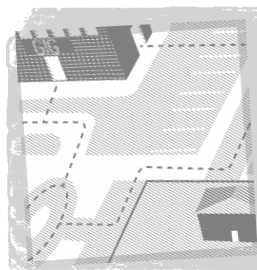
payoff is in the song’s last line: Speaking of the road, the hero claims “I know where it goes... THAT’S WHY I’M GOING... SO... SLOW.” Overlooking the fact that our hero’s dissipated condition has caused him to use an adjective as an adverb, the last line pretty much says it all: Does the road lead to insanity? Does the road lead back home to the mundanity of life? Does the road lead to yet another gig? Any path anyone chooses in life ultimately ends in death, so why hurry? Are we going anywhere important? Does any of this matter in the big picture? Did we really reach enlightenment or was it all just a bunch of fart jokes? Either way, what’s the point? Why is anybody doing anything? Christ, no wonder this album is so tormented-sounding.

Bonus Track: “Uranus”

I always view this kooky instrumental as the post-movie credits music, like the lights are coming on in the theater and people are walking out going “whoa” and stepping on popcorn and stuff. I couldn’t begin to tell you what time signature it’s in.

...so, yes. That is my take on the *All* album: An unwilling hero leaves home, is tested, gains enlightenment, and is slowly driven insane by the realization that, in the long run, enlightenment isn’t worth much more than a fart joke. Come back next time and maybe I’ll spend eight days discussing “Brainwash” by Flipper!

That’s *All* folks,
—Norb



BOREDOM AND VELOCITY

JV MCDONOUGH

**Jami Sleaze's
Mystery Disease.**

Sick of Being Sick

Ah, the joyful camaraderie of the road! A chance to be in the (forced) company of (mostly) like-minded friends as you spread your particular book of the rock'n'roll gospel to the masses in another city, another time zone, maybe even another hemisphere. You share everything: toothpaste, bourbon, hats, cables, drugs (if you're that kind of band), and maybe even lovers (if you're *that* kind of band). But sharing is not limited to the aforementioned perks. You are also very likely to share some sort of physical malady to complement the psychological one that finds you playing, say, an unheated former chocolate factory in the north of Germany in December. This is The Official Tour Cold. And just like a set-ending popular song, maybe each player gets to take a brief solo: here's JV on the Deep, Racking Cough For Two Days! If you're particularly unlucky, there may even be an encore.

This should come as no surprise to anyone who's spent time touring. There are so many potential ways to contract an illness when you're on the road; it's essentially a drawn-out game of Russian roulette played with your immune system. Instead of a revolver with a single bullet, the weapon is a lingering handshake with the bronchitic soundman, the microphone last used by the scabrous singer who placed it entirely in her mouth prior to your set, or even the bowl of potato chips backstage, which has been trailed through and lingered in by a few dozen unwashed hands over the course of the night.

Now, I'm no germophobic prima donna about this stuff. I spent every childhood summer at harness racetracks and the rest of my time around lots of dogs. I grew up drinking out of garden hoses and pushing the limits of the five-second rule if I dropped a Popsicle on the floor at the barn. I gladly picked up injured pigeons and sparrows and nursed them back to health as my mother went into neurotic rhapsodies about all the diseases carried by those "flying rats." I've got no problem sharing food off my fork or a drink from my bottle. But sometimes when I'm traveling, my Spidey-Sickness-Sense gets all prickly and I can just *tell* I'm about to make contact with some sort of vector of the thing that will wreck me for the next week or so. That's when I shake hands with my gloves on, or turn down the bottle of booze as it's passed to me, or avoid the person expressively relating a story with lots

of "H"s and "P"s in it. This small bit of self-protection has served me well. I can honestly say I've never been in the role of Patient Zero when traveling. But once someone in our company gets sick, I know I'll inevitably be following in their miserable footsteps before too long.

M.O.T.O.'s most recent tour of Europe was a thirty-day midwinter ballbuster that started out in the very reasonable climate of Italy and Spain, but then rapidly wound its way north into France, Belgium, an appropriately pretzel-shaped route through Germany, and finally finished with a week in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. Scandinavia in December is pretty much what you'd expect, weather-wise. Pre-tour, I had been bracing myself for this last leg of the journey, assuming that unless everything went exactly right some Finn would be discovering six leather-jacket-clad skeletons in the ruins of our van come spring, with some of the remains showing clear signs of cannibalism. Surprisingly, that part of the trip was without major incident. The Tour Gods decided to flip the script and give us the bulk of our challenges early on. The most frightening was what I'll refer to as Jami Sleaze's Mystery Disease.

Instead of the usual M.O.T.O. model of picking up a drummer and second guitarist at the destination, the 2017 Euro-tour found us bringing along our home team, the New England lineup of Cory Taylor on drums and Jami Sleaze on guitar. Both of these guys are hardcore road warriors and backed up Paul on more than one national tour before I ever joined the band. Having them on board was like a mental security blankie for me: I knew there'd be no worries on stage or off if they were with us.

In a typically thoughtful gesture, Jami arranged to arrive in Italy a few days ahead of time with his wife (Jenny Hurricane; you know her from The Midnight Creeps) so they could enjoy a few romantic days looking at cathedrals and having near-death experiences with Italian drivers. Cory, Paul, and I joined up with them at the first gig.

That was at a punk rock house in Suzzara, Italy called La Casa dalle Finestre che Ridono, which translates into "The House with the Laughing Windows," named after an acclaimed Italian thriller. In the States we're used to house-show places with names like The Crypt or The Boneyard or The Garage,

but in Italy even the places where they have basement shows are classy. Jami and Jenny met us there with only a few minutes before our set time. I thought maybe Jami looked a little peaked, but figured he was beat from running around *à la turista*, whereas the rest of us had arrived just that morning and were still in the weird adrenalized fog of recent long-distance travel. Our set was great; a loud, joyful expression of accomplishment after all of the tribulations Cory, Paul, and I had gone through on our own flight over (a subject, perhaps, for another day). As we launched into "Dance Dance Dance Dance Dance to the Radio" and the crowd lost its collective mind, it felt like we were giving a giant middle finger to the forces that tried to screw up the first leg of our journey. We are *here*, motherfuckers, and we're gonna kill at every single show!

The sense of triumph continued when the area was reconfigured after we played so that tables and chairs could be set up and an incredible meal of homemade risotto, savory pastries, and wine was put out for the entire group of musicians and audience. I found Jenny and held court with her in a small room off to the side. At one point Jami dropped in, politely declined another helping of food and excused himself to the room upstairs where we'd all be spending the night. It seemed early, but the overly warm, smoke-filled basement was not exactly conducive to a sense of alertness. I turned in as well not long after. Jami was already in bed but awake. As I crawled into the one across the room from him I asked how he was doing. Instead of the expected "Great show! It's nice to finally relax" or something similar, he disclosed he had spent the last hour being copiously sick to his stomach and was now running a fever.

Uh-oh.

That old Native American parable about the two wolves comes to mind. My Good Wolf was overwhelmed with concern for my band-brother. Jami is a rock. He works so hard for the band. It's not fair he's feeling so bad on our first night of tour! My Bad Wolf instantly began chanting "PLEASE LET IT BE FOOD POISONING" over and over. Because if it wasn't something he ate... that meant we would all get it. My Good Wolf was relieved when Jenny arrived almost immediately thereafter and started tending to her husband, looking for things which might soothe his stomach. My



SIMON SOTELO

Touring is essentially a drawn-out game of Russian roulette played with your immune system.

Bad Wolf kept whispering in my ear “YOU SHARED A MIC WITH HIM TONIGHT, YOU’RE DOOMED.” I genuinely worried about poor Jami, but goddamnit, I’m a huge wuss and will basically die if I get a stomach bug while stuck in a van and playing shows every night.

Although it was a restive night, Jami declared he felt somewhat better in the morning. Our hosts prepared us a typically wonderful lunch of pasta, sausage, and wine but I ate less than my fill, as I was still anticipating I would probably be unpleasantly “giving it back” within the next forty-eight hours. I hated myself every time I asked Jami how he was feeling because I knew my concern was not purely for him.

“It must have been food poisoning,” I kept saying, trying to make it true.

“Nah. Jenny ate everything I did and she’s fine.”

JUST AGREE WITH ME THAT IT WAS FOOD POISONING, PLEASE.

The next couple of Italian dates found Jami improving and none of us showing signs of whatever his illness was. I started to relax and truly enjoy the ridiculously luxurious meals offered to us at every stop. Then we hit Genova.

Load in was a harried nightmare of pushing roadcases up a quarter mile of cobblestone alleys to the little club we were playing. But once we got there, we were welcomed by a bottle of Jack Daniels and another of good red wine, and the news that dinner would be pizza from a place around the corner. Sometime between soundcheck and gig time, Jami started to crash again. We told him not to worry, Cory and Paul and I have played dozens of shows as a three-piece, we’d be just fine. Jami gratefully sank onto a bench beneath a blanket of leather jackets and went to sleep. Now I really felt like an asshole. Jami is the King of the Troopers, the guy is bulletproof as far as I’m concerned, but all of a sudden he’s incapacitated by

whatever this illness is, and I had been just worried about myself the whole time. What if something’s really wrong? What if he needs a hospital? But Jami insisted he’d be okay and perhaps this was some weird delayed manifestation of jet lag.

One show in Lyon, France and then we were on to Spain. Each day found Jami feeling better until he made a full recovery. He ate whatever he wanted, enjoyed various good beers and wine with dinner, and rocked his ass off every night. None of us ever contracted the Mystery Disease, and to this day the best we can come up with is somehow he was allergic to Italy. Of course, by the time we got back into France, the Official Tour Cold started making its miserable snotty rounds. But somehow it didn’t seem quite as bad this time. I’ll take my perspective wherever I can get it these days.

—J.V. McDonough



FIRE HEADS
(Madison, garage, punk,
smackdowns)



WOOD CHICKENS
Meat Puppets meet the
Minutemen!



SEGER LIBERATION ARMY- LP
Tom Potter and crew are back
with an LP's worth of Seger
System favorites!



THE HUSSY
I See Just Fine EP
The Hussy's first record
in two years!

COMING SOON



White Savage



Sweet JAP



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All American Psycho



TWIN GUNS - LP



GALLERY NIGHT

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SWEET KNIVES
(Psssst...Lost Sounds Reboot)



HEAVY LIDS
Bleed Me EP
Scum, Sci Fi, Punk
from New Orleans



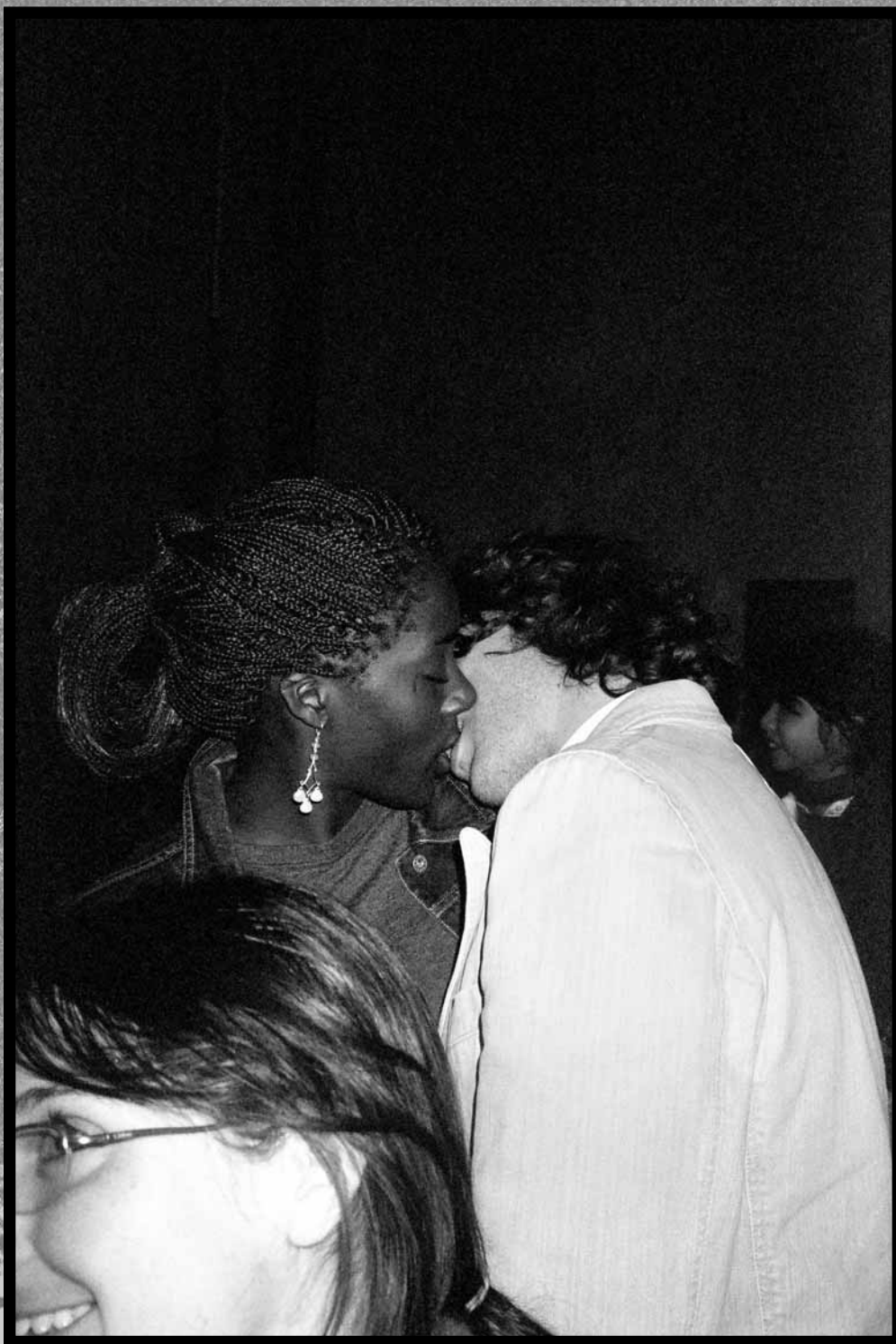
FIRE RETARDED -
Scroggz Manor LP/CD
Featuring Bobby Hussy from
the Hussy, stoned, garage,
fuzzed out, punk, rock!



HEAVY PSYCH ROCK
Trio from Dublin,
Ireland.

COMING SOON

Stop Worrying and
Love the Bomb
Richard Vain-Ex-Ponys
Gino and the Goons
Facility Men
Wood Chickens



Dan Monick's Photo Page
Los Angeles, 2005



**A feral cat is
proud but he
is not stupid**

Lifers

Some of them resemble dying trees
Slumped over in the ground
The threadbare fabric of their old clothes
Is like moss and cobwebs growing up their sides
Hurt trees
Resigned to fall over in the forest
With no one around
To hear them make a sound

Others remind me of the ghosts of ticket scalpers
Standing beside the onramp to eternity
Dissipating and reforming in a phosphorescent light
Hollering, "I got tickets!"
Mindless hucksters buying and selling anything at all
Echoing like clamoring voices in an endless hallway
Forever clinging to the angle
In the shadow of the street hustlers they once were

Still others are like donkeys that have been given a nice sweat suit
And a watch
And a new pair of Nikes
And an iron, a radio, and a flat screen TV
They meticulously hand wash, steam press, and fold
They make fantastical protective cases
They scrub the dirt (real or imagined) with a tooth brush and
A special concoction of homemade detergent
They are careful never to walk on dust
Maniacally creasing, folding, and pressing
They are fanatically possessive of their possessions
Too stubborn to see
Inside them still beats the heart of an ass
And a donkey is still a donkey with a nice pair of shoes

My favorite type is like a feral cat
A feral cat is proud but he is not stupid
A feral cat is always on the lookout for trouble
He doesn't usually gang up with the other cats
He doesn't need anyone
He doesn't bother anybody
A feral cat is a loner
But don't you forget that he still has to eat

Lifer,
Through me
You see the desperation of the streets
Still folding in the edges of humanity beyond these walls
Remember the crack houses!
Remember the needle-ridden alleyways
Don't forget about the nights when you were cold and alone
With nowhere to go
It isn't easy out there either
Lifer, I can become you
My movements and members seized by inertia
My blood frozen like a lizard in a blizzard
Apathy splitting the heavens in my chest

Until shallow breath is all I have left
The world outside of here is hard to live in, too

We gathered in a huddle after the N.A. meeting to say the
Lord's Prayer
I wanted to disappear in their voices
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done
But no matter how quiet I was (even inside my own hand)
I could still hear my voice with theirs

O' trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea
A changeling you would be
Holding closer to hope in your unyielding hindsight
Asleep
You can't arise from beneath the blanket of this dream
Clawing and ripping at the tangled mess of your sheets
Swimming endlessly to the illusion of surface
In an undignified death
And unable to die

For Nella

Clouds have a way of invading your space
And in each place you run
There is still a ribbon of gray
Attached to the corpse you've become
But it's crazy
'Cause there is yet redemption
Within the future's breath
Which is only a lingering kiss
Between two parting lovers' lips
Who
In their desperation for each other
Have managed to push
What mighta saved their love
Away
We gotta shank deeply
The self-doubt and criticisms
That arise
Like a speed sore on the brain
In the scarcity of our conscious hours
'Cause
My split and cracked fingertips are still amazingly clenching the
comforter of hope we slept beneath when we last dreamed at ease

—Sean Dunne

Girls Night In

The girl next door has a story of her own
She looks out the window in disbelief
 Stroking the bars
 Knowing she's alone
Surrounded by fences defenseless
She cries she tries to keep it quiet
 But at night like everyone else
 She loses the fight....

—Michelle Gonzales

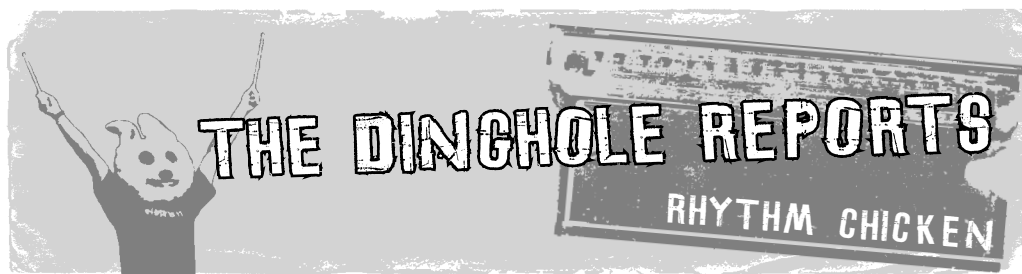
**A feral cat is
a loner
But don't you
forget that he
still has to eat**

This month's poetry selection was submitted by two California inmates. We feel that this platform should continue to be used to give voice to under represented people. Incarcerated people are treated unjustly and need to be encouraged to learn and to express themselves artistically.



SEAN DUNNE





**In the interests
of doing the
deed before
being detained.**

At the 'Tute

In my bizarre little corner of Wisconsin, there is a community known as Institute. A Roman Catholic boarding school apparently once stood there and the town kept the name. This unincorporated community has the two things any real Wisconsin back road intersection needs: a church and a tavern. The church has a large parking lot which goes right up to the intersection. Only a few times a week, during a church service, are there a number of cars on the church side of the lot. The rest of the week, however, there are more cars parked closer to the far end of the lot, a closer walking distance to the gem directly across the street, the Institute Saloon.

To put it mildly, this place is the real deal. The Institute Saloon has been in this very building on this very spot since 1895. That is over 120 years, folks. Since before the automobile, this amazing establishment has been hosting locals and visitors alike. Over the years the patrons within these walls spoke of modern events like, oh, two world wars, the Cuban missile crisis, the events from September 11, and other riveting topics like farming issues, the Green Bay Packers, and the annual influx of tourists passing through town. In 1912, the owner added on a beautiful dance hall on the back of the building where they instantly started hosting square dance events and wrestling matches! I, myself, have even seen a few polka festivals there in the last decade. This place is just oozing with a historical essence of pure Wisconsin.

Once you walk in the front door you instantly notice the large, regulation size pool table in the center of the room. It has leather pouch pockets and no coin slot. There is a sign on the nearby wall that reads, "No one under the age of sixteen allowed to play pool! Any ball off the table, buck in the jukebox. Pool is twenty-five cents a game." A keen eye will then notice what appears to be a recycled Slim-Jim box on the bar with a slot in the top for coins, labeled "Pool 25 cents." Why would someone under the age of sixteen be in a saloon, you ask? Remember, this is Wisconsin. This pool table is known as the best in the county.

So, I celebrated my forty-seventh year on this planet a few days ago. My Hen asked what I wanted to do for my big day.

I knew I had to run my soup shop for most of the day, but once I closed up and was free to enjoy the spoils of my special day, I knew it was time to get "institutionalized." (Suicidal Tendencies references seem sophomoric and disrespectful at this point in light of the Institute Saloon's much longer legacy.) I sent out a group text to a select group of friends to join us for food, drinks, and fun.

I closed up my soup shop after a relaxingly slow Monday in my ghost town that is Ephraim in winter. I trudged through the snow to the well-house, where I store my Chicken kit, and moved my musical weapons to the car. While driving the thirty-some miles down to Institute I fielded birthday calls from friends and family. While zooming down County Highway A and catching up with my nephew, a furry critter suddenly ran into my path. In this icy winter landscape, we learn to never swerve to avoid, just plow on through and may god have mercy on the poor critter's soul. I told my nephew I had just smooshed a chicken! He refused to believe me, until I told him the chicken had long ears and whiskers. "Ooooooh, *that* kind of chicken," he replied. What other kind is there?

I initially had plans to ring in my forty-seventh with a debut Chicken gig at the Institute Saloon, yet to be tarnished by my ruckus. I began to wonder what the squished road chicken was supposed to mean. Was it an omen or a warning from some Ruckus God up in the clouds? Was the unlucky little clucker trying to deter my mission? Did he know something I didn't? Would I be *murdered if I entered there*? I said goodbye to my nephew and pulled over in the next village. A quick inspection of my vehicle showed no signs of chicken squishage. I soldiered on.

I arrived at the 'Tute. I cautiously walked in to see two old men sitting at the bar and Bearded Shane shooting pool with his girlfriend. The scene appeared to be tame enough. I bellied up to the bar and took advantage of the 'Tute's long-standing special for the first time, free beer on your birthday! I took a sip. It tasted fine. My parents called and sung me happy birthday, which they do every year, only this year it was while I was at the urinal in

the 'Tute. That seemed humorous enough, but nothing a street chicken should be warning me about. My Hen soon showed up with a handful of other friends ready to join the birthday fun.

One friend, new to the county, replied, "I've always assumed I'd end up murdered if I entered there." Well, once inside, he soon understood the glory of the 'Tute (as some call it). This means a lot coming from me, but this place also serves a gloriously mean bowl of chili!

We all chatted and laughed it up while enjoying tasty double cheeseburgers, cheese-heavy pizza, and deep-fried cheese curds. The *musical* cheese was just moments away. I took my friends into the dance hall out back and we all commented on how it would be a great venue for hosting larger concerts, if only city folks would venture up to Institute. Tonight's concert, however, would be in a much more *intimate* setting. I gulped down some more cheese and beer, grabbed my roadies Logan and Will, and ventured outside to retrieve some drums! Ruckus would finally grace this historic establishment!

**Dinghole Report #163:
All I Wanted Was a Peps... PBR,
and I Got It!**

(Rhythm Chicken sighting #707)

My clan of weirdos huddled in one corner of the saloon while the two older gentlemen up at the bar chewed the fat with the owner Dennis. Because I like to share the ruckus with all humankind, I set up my Chicken kit directly behind the two gentlemen at the bar. They never took notice of the drumset being assembled just inches behind their behinds! My friends all supplied themselves with refills and stood ready to accept some birthday ruckus. In the interests of doing the deed before being detained, I hurriedly sat on my roost and pulled on the Chicken head. One last time, the road chicken's demise crossed my mind....

It was time. My opening drum roll echoed through the warm little saloon. Beer signs rattled. The phone cameras came out. Dust fell from the decades-old beer signs adorning the walls. I pounded out the ruckus like it was my last day on earth! The Chicken ears violently flopped



KASIA ONISZCZUK

The musical cheese was just moments away.

Ruckus would finally grace this historic establishment!

this way and that! My wings were a blur of feathers and drumsticks! Rhythmic chaos filled the room! A few times, my audio onslaught halted to accept the cheers and jeers from my clan! The air was thick with anxiety. How would the Institute Saloon react to such a bombastic poultry assault?

The two men at the bar barely took notice of the overbearing lunacy directly behind them. A few times, they looked back and chuckled, then continued their conversation with Dennis... as if this happens every night. Is *this* what the road

chicken was warning me about? Are my rhythms growing so tame they cannot even ruffle the feathers of the fine folks of Institute? Am I a has-been? Am I all washed up? *Is this the end?*

I tackled my drums and threw the weapons around, finishing in a panting pile of Chicken on the saloon floor. The locals continued their conversation, taking little notice of the ground zero just behind them. Perhaps the road chicken was trying to tell me that this particular saloon had seen 120 years of chaos, and what impact could my scrawny Chicken ass make?

By the evening's end, our luck finally ran out. We all huddled around the "sliding-shelf, quarter-dropping gambling machine"—which had a hand-drawn sign on the front which read "The Bank of Dennis!"—angrily depositing quarter after quarter after quarter into this evil machine, its shelf full of quarters pushing forward and back, taunting us northern bringers of ruckus.

—Rhythm Chicken

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'Neverunite' 7"

Raw, throat shredding, melodic Leatherface worship from Japan.



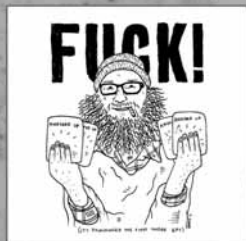
Bedford Falls
'Send More Bees' LP

Fuzzy guitar driven indie punk from South Wales. Their 3rd album & best yet.



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'Traverse' LP

The debut LP from the best band in Paris. Anthemic, lyrically dark punk with depth.



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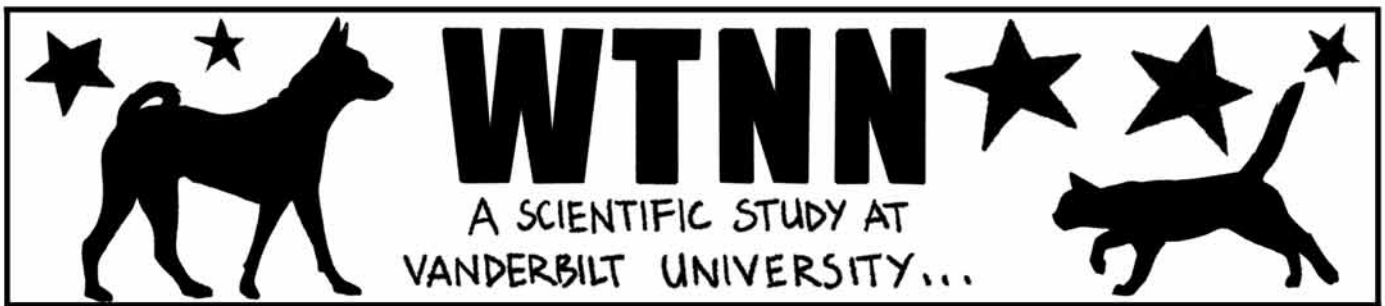


**DOUBLE
DOWN
SALOON**

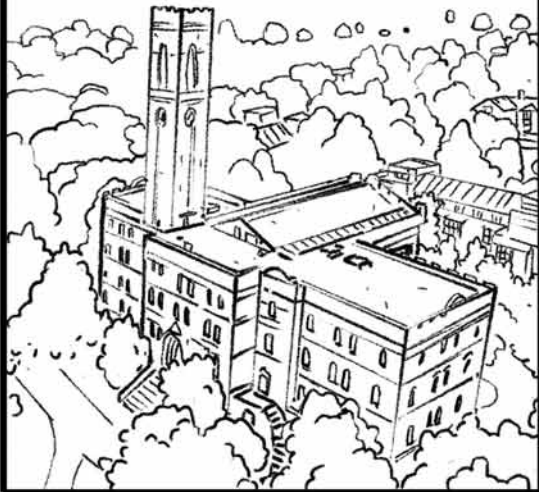
doubledownsaloon.com

Screaming Females
"All At Once"

Don Giovanni Records



... HAS BEEN CONDUCTED
TO SETTLE AN AGE OLD
DEBATE.



NASHVILLE, TN

WHICH ANIMAL IS
MORE INTELLIGENT:
DOG OR CAT?

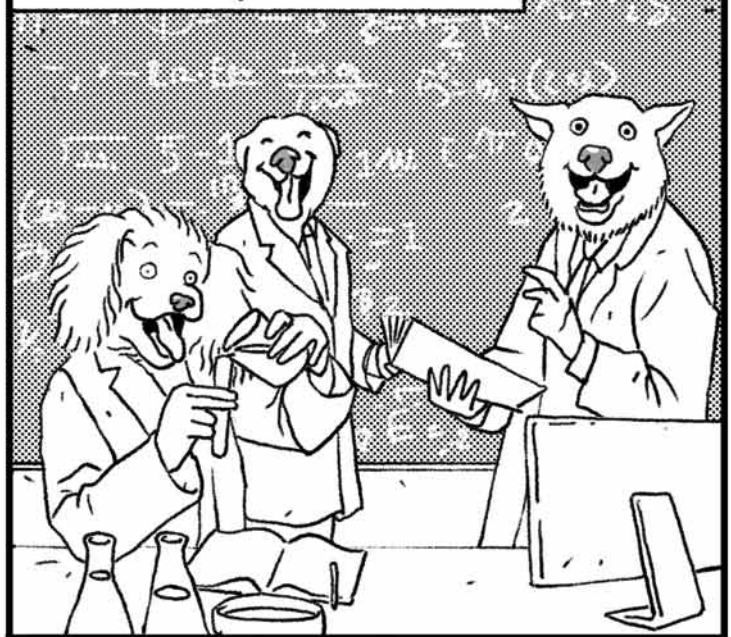


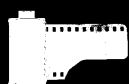
STUDIES WERE THOROUGH.
THE RESULTS CONCLUSIVE.
DOGS ARE SMARTER THAN
CATS.



DOGS HAVE MORE CORTICAL NEURONS THAN CATS.

GOOD BOY, SCIENCE!





Chris Boarts Larson Photo Column - Asylum

Chris Boarts Larson, www.slugandlettuce.net | fb.me/slugandlettuce





Asylum at Strange Matter 1/5/18



Long-running RVA punk ragers Asylum had a killer record release show at Strange Matter in January. Their full-length album *Modern Hysteria* was released by local RVA Vinyl Conflict Records. The new songs and new drummer delivered a louder, heavier, and even more powerfully epic and metallic sound. It was an awesome show all around with a solid lineup filled out by Incisor (Philly), Essex Muro (N.C.), and Future Terror (RVA). Asylum has been a long

favorite of mine. I'm super stoked to see them continue and deliver an excellent new release!

Check it out:

vinylconflict.bandcamp.com/album/modern-hysteria

—Chris Boarts Larson





I'M AGAINST IT

DESIGNATED DALE

As the van rolled up, things got tense.

Fats Domino, Stryper, Black Flag, and a Douchebag

Fats Domino

One of the first entertaining stories I ever heard about attending a live show was from my father back when he was in his twenties. He went to see Fats Domino perform at a piano bar in Los Angeles during the late '50s. The neighborhood wasn't the most welcoming kind of neighborhood to white folks, which my dad and his friend were. You remember the scene in *Animal House*, where the Deltas pick up a couple sorority girls and go on a road trip? They stopped off at a juke joint where they notice Otis Day And The Knights on the marquee, the same band that played their frat party. They walked in and every single person in the place froze and turned their heads in their direction. That's basically what happened when my old man and his friend walked into the bar. They were the only two Caucasians in the place (that's *honkys* for those of you who don't know what a Caucasian is), and it was packed.

The piano bar was one of them old school type of bandstands, with booths lining each side of the room, and a wide, long bar running down the middle of the space with barstools on each side, leading to a small stage setup at the front.

"Let's try and find a couple of stools at the bar," my dad said, and my father's pal got a tad nervous as they walked through the crowd.

"Richard, I don't know about this. It doesn't feel like we're welcome here."

"Fuck that," my father replied. "We're here to see Fats. Just be cool, it'll be fine."

They soon scoped out two pretty decent stools at the bar and settled in to get some quality time rock'n'roll on. Fats came onstage with his bandmates and launched into what my father said were two of his new songs at that time. After the second song, Fats took a breather, exchanging pleasantries with the full house, when his line of sight landed on my father and his friend. Fats stared at them both for a second, smiled, and announced his next song, nodding in their direction.

"This is for my two white boys right here!"

The place lost it. Everyone, including my old man, laughed their asses off. His friend was still frozen on his stool, not sure if they were about to be rolled, but thanks to Fats Domino, that wasn't gonna happen that night. The ice had been broken.

I picked my father's brain over the years before he passed, hoping to find out exactly which bar this happened, or what part of beyond-downtown L.A. it was located. Wherever they happen to be now, I'm sure Fats and he are grooving as we speak.

Stryper

Because they had shut down the junior high school in my neighborhood years prior, my elementary school was kindergarten through the seventh grade, and my high school was eighth through twelfth grade. When I was in the eighth grade (1983-'84), thrash metal was starting to rear its beautiful, wonderfully ugly head. Slayer's and Metallica's first full lengths were kicking people's teeth in, and things were starting to get interesting real fast, with the crossover era ushering in a shit ton of great new bands.

So, who did *our* school book to play in our quad at lunch? Stryper. Oh boy, an overtly Christian heavy metal band from Orange County. Their name was a backronym for, "salvation through redemption, yielding peace, encouragement and righteousness." Anyway, as soon as the lunch bell rang people swarmed like locusts to get a coveted spot by the stage. And some of these locusts weren't necessarily fans of the Yellow and Black Attack, either. Stryper immediately kicked into their songs about Jesus, world love, and what have you. Not only were they trying to spread the metal gospel up on the concrete stage of our quad, but they proceeded to toss out a few softcover bibles with their band logo emblazoned across the book covers into the crowd, the same softcover bibles they winged out to the audiences at the bigger shows.

A handful of heavy-duty thrash fans in the crowd, the same ones who were offering their middle fingers to Stryper during their set, grabbed the thrown copies of the bibles and hurled them back onstage at the band. The school security and teachers weren't too happy about the thrashers' sudden interest in book recycling during this lunchtime debacle, and the shenanigans were soon squashed. That didn't phase the thrash folk. The horns went up as Stryper played the last part of their set. I'd be lying if I said that a few of the band members weren't getting bummed out on a group of high school

kids smiling and offering up two of their Sunday best Ronnie James Dio with each hand. I was a bit surprised back then that none of the kids' parents came to complain that bibles were being tossed to their kids at school. Can you imagine how something of the sort would fly now?

Black Flag

A few years before I started attending La Mirada High School, in 1980-'81, somehow, some way, Black Flag bassist Chuck Dukowski talked his way over the phone with the activities director at the school into having his cover band play. He rolled out some spiel that they'd—no mention of Black Flag—be a great fit for the high school kids, as they covered all the more popular rock tunes. Little did the activities director know he was about to open the campus up to one of the most notorious punk bands at the time.

Everything was set to go until the morning before Black Flag showed up. Word leaked out that Black Flag was doing a gig at this particular high school, so punks from the surrounding neighborhoods were walking around the campus while classes were going on and clusters of punks crusted around the regional park across the street from the high school. The school administration quickly got wind why these unfamiliar punk rockers were cruising around. As soon as the van rolled up, that's when things got tense. Here's an excerpt from Jay W. Babcock's article in *Mojo*, 2001.

Chuck Dukowski: *The most threatening it ever got, when we were actually looking down the barrel, is when we showed up at La Mirada High School and they wouldn't let us play. I had just gotten off the phone with the school's guy an hour earlier and he'd confirmed the gig. We get there and the guy's saying, "We couldn't reach you, we called your agent," and blah-blah-blah. I said "That agent was me, dude. You confirmed, and you're a lying sack of shit!" Ginn threw a cup of coffee at him and they called the cops. Greg got it for assault.*

I always wished that someone from photo class was outside shooting film by the front of the school when this all went down. That would've made for some excellent fanzine photography, not to mention having a permanent souvenir from the high school I



SHANE MILNER

Not only were Stryper trying to spread the metal gospel, but they tossed out bibles with their band logo emblazoned across the book covers.

went to. *Rock 'N' Roll High School* it wasn't, but it's still pretty fuckin' funny, although not too funny for Black Flag, who had to drive a good thirty miles out from the South Bay to La Mirada to watch Ginn get arrested. Okay, now that I think about it that *IS* funny.

A Wooly-coiffed, Pelt-Sporting Douchebag

One of the funniest encounters/burns involved my old homie and guitarist Mark. It happened during one of those drinking sessions which carried on throughout the day

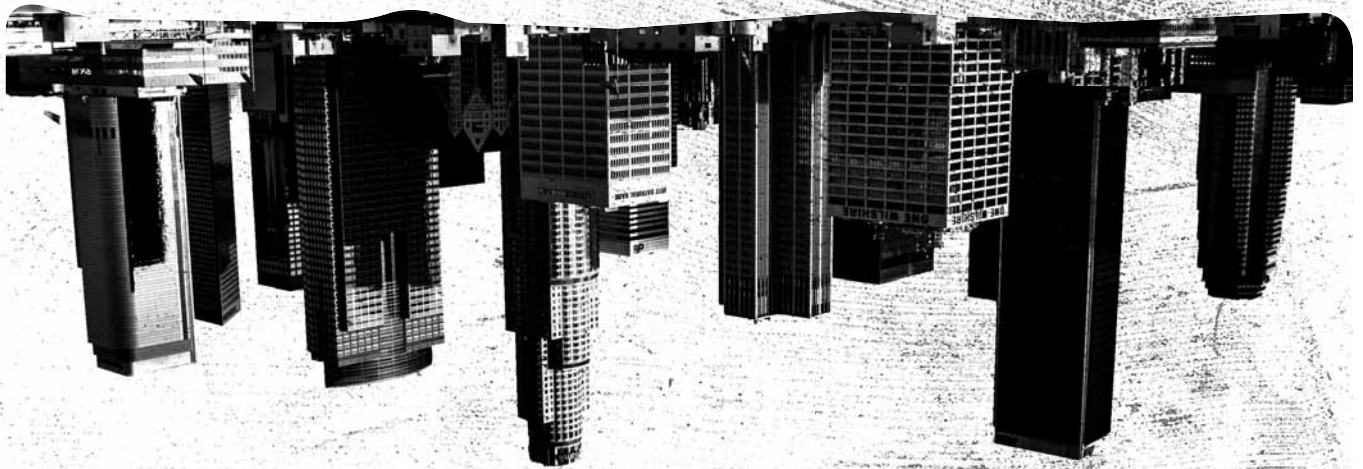
and back into the night, a revisited wee hours of the morning type of bender. After a full night of alley surfing around Los Angeles, Mark ended up with a group of crusters at Barney's Beanery, a famous Hollywood eatery that's been around since 1920. After they all piled into their tables, Mark spotted some wooly-headed guy walking by with a few blondes. Noticing that the guy was wearing leather pants with different animal pelts fastened around the legs with leather straps, Mark looked up to everyone at the tables, his eyes bleeding drunk, and loudly cracked wise: "Who the fuck does this kook

think he *is*? Gene Simmons?" Right as he said that, the wooly-coiffed, pelt-sporting douchebag suddenly stopped walking and turned to glare at Mark.

Yup, it was Gene Simmons, all right. The table erupted into laughter and Simmons had no choice but to slink away, as there were more than a few undesirables sitting at that table that would have not given a second thought to give Gene a proper beat down.

—Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com

CITY MOUSE



INTERVIEW WITH MISKI DEE RODRIGUEZ
BY EMMA JOHNSON

PHOTOS BY BRIAN H. MELNICKY, KELLY SULLIVAN,
WAYNE LAWTON, AND LORIEN SMITH (ARETESOPHIST.COM)
LAYOUT BY LAUREN DENITZIO

City Mouse made me fall in love with melodic, sing-along punk rock again. They reminded me that, even though I'm well into adulthood, I can still be struck by a song the same way I was when I was a teenager. I can still experience that sudden realization that I'm not alone in the world, that other people are feeling the way I'm feeling, and it's fucking okay. This is a band that has been honing the art of soulful, heart-on-sleeves punk since 2001, just bouncing around the country from their current home base of Lansing, Michigan, playing shows everywhere, working their butts off and not making a big deal about it, even though that level of perseverance and commitment to making rad music seems like a big deal to me.

I asked City Mouse founder Miski Dee Rodriguez to pick me up at Chicago O'Hare after my flight back from Minneapolis. Not only did she agree, but she took me out to a fancy restaurant, where our meals were on the house thanks to the City Mouse fan running the kitchen. We ate by a big fireplace and talked about music and life.



LORIEN SMITH

IT FELT SO GOOD TO HEAR A COMPOSITION COMPLETELY COME TOGETHER. I FELT LIKE I BUILT FURNITURE WITH MY BARE HANDS. IT EXORCISES YOUR DEMONS. IT'S MY THERAPY, YOU KNOW?

Emma: Before you started City Mouse, you played music with your dad?

Miski: Yeah. I'm the first person on my dad's side of the family born in the United States, or even born outside of Peru. My dad's family is from Cuzco, Peru. They're a really prominent musical family—everyone plays music. When he came here in 1978, he got odd jobs because he was an architect there, but his degree didn't transfer to the U.S. He got a contracting job, so he was putting bread on the table while playing shows and stuff.

So he and I, we had some regular gigs and we'd also do out of town shows in San Francisco, Arizona, and Nevada. We still jam, but it's all Andean folk music—so with pan flutes and drums made of cow skins and things like that. My dad's a really good classical guitar player. He can play anything. He and my little brother can play any instrument. He can line up beer bottles and play like a symphony. It's ridiculous. I'm not skilled like that. I don't have that kind of musical talent where I can just make sound out of whatever. But I guess I write, and that's something they don't do.

Emma: Totally. So would you play guitar with them?

Miski: No. I would just sing. It's a musical family, so everyone's taught to hone their one instrument, the thing they're good at. So with my dad, he was always the guitar player. With me, they always just had me sing. I had a strong voice when I was a little kid.

Emma: You have a strong voice now. So what kind of gigs would they be?

Miski: Bars, mostly.

Emma: Obviously not your standard dive bars?

Miski: I played Al's Bar in Los Angeles when I was a kid. It was so weird. We play bars now that have other kinds of music nights. It was that kind of situation. It was a punk bar. I'm sure I wasn't supposed to be in there. I was probably eight.

Emma: I don't think the age restrictions apply when you're in the band.

Miski: I vaguely remember so much writing and painting on the walls? But the only other thing I remember is a bunch of people that I assumed were bikers playing pool.

Emma: Was it exciting to you?

Miski: It was normal to me. When I was a kid I could easily just be relaxed or fall asleep to the sounds of partying. I grew up with a single dad. He was probably twenty-eight or something. He was like, "Come on and party."

Emma: What do you think you bring to City Mouse from those experiences?

Miski: The normalcy of it. Once in a while, I try to process what it is I do with my life. I'll think, "Is it weird? Is it crazy?" Because a lot of people, especially other family members, they think I'm nuts that I just set off on all these adventures. To them it seems crazy. But I guess to me it just seems normal. That experience makes me feel like it's normal to go out and play songs to people and get paid for it. Because sometimes when I think about that aspect of it, I'm like, "What? They're giving me money?" I'm just so grateful for it.

Emma: What was it that sparked you to start your own band?

Miski: I've always written songs, but they were just for me, you know? Like, they would just come out. And I never really played them for anybody. The crowd that I fell into in junior high and high school, they were all into punk rock. It started out with everyone listening to Black Flag, the Descendents, GBH, all those standard punk patch bands. I realized that I really liked the bands that have the hooks, the pop sensibilities.

The '90s opened that up so much. All the sudden people like Todd from F.Y.P and Recess Records started to make it accessible to where it didn't seem like such a far off thing for bands to put out their own records. Before it seemed like only rock stars put out records. There were people who figured that out, that they can just go and do it. All those pop punk bands in the '90s started to go in that direction where they still sounded poppy. It wasn't crazy punk, and the songs weren't about anarchy or anti-establishment, anything like that. They were just about feelings. There are so many love songs and songs about loss, pressure, daily anxiety, all these normal things.

I made friends with a band called Falling Sickness and I toured with them, kind of a roadie, driver, merch person. I started getting more into a tour management role and ended up working for Hopeless Records for a while in the late '90s, early 2000s. And I met bands like Fifteen, Scared Of Chaka—all these bands whose music I absolutely adored. I loved working for them but I never, ever thought about actually being in one of these bands. I'm not sure why. For some reason I'd never seen myself as the person who is in a band, let alone the person who is the main person in the band. I just kind of found it out.

At a party, they were passing a guitar around in the wee hours of the morning, and I played a few songs for some friends and they were like, "Let's start a band." And I was like, "That's crazy. What?" We started a band, and for the first time ever I really heard all the songs come together—the drum part matched, the bass part matched, the guitar part matched the vocals, and it's an actual song. That was life changing. It was magical. It felt so good to hear a composition completely come together. I felt like I built furniture with my bare hands. And it just gets everything out. It exorcises your demons. It's my therapy, you know? I don't talk to people about my problems. I'm not that kind of sharer.

Emma: You sing to people about them.

Miski: Yeah. What's that line? "Everything too stupid to be said is sung"? I feel like when I try to talk to people about my problems I'm demanding too much of them, and everybody's got problems, you know?

Emma: It's safer to put it in song form.

Miski: It's just natural for me, I guess. The word "expression," literally, as in "get out." I needed that to become who I am. I feel like I was lost and then music, if it didn't save my life it definitely gave it meaning and focus, which is something I just didn't have. I was just floating.

Emma: You mentioned that you made the decision that you're going to make music forever. At what point did you make that decision?

Miski: I think the first time I ever played a complete song, when I started this band, City



Mouse. I just had that moment, like, “This is for me. This is me, this literally is me.” I never had that before. I feel like I just didn’t know who I was and now I know.

Emma: You also mentioned that a certain movie might have had a big role in kind of your musical development, where you wanted to go with your music.

Miski: Oh hell yeah. *Josie and the Pussycats*, absolutely. I was already listening to so much girl pop and girl rock. There was a ton of really rad bands in the ‘90s that were female fronted and on mainstream radio even. Juliana Hatfield, Hole, the Cranberries. All these bands had really beautiful, really good songs. And that *Josie and the Pussycats* movie, those songs are so good. They’re so together, solid pop jams. I had never played an electric guitar before. I was only playing acoustic guitars because my dad only has acoustic guitars. I’d just gotten an electric guitar and that movie definitely made me plug it in.

Emma: Fantastic.

Miski: It also made me want to have a band with all girls, but it was so hard to find other women wanting to do that. I think there’s been one other female member of City Mouse, ever, out of a total of forty-one. And not for lack of trying. I started the band in Lexington, Kentucky, so it was a smaller town.

Emma: Forty-one members is a lot of members.

Miski: It’s never been any kind of a diva situation or anything like that, where I’m just kicking out members left and right. I’m pretty sure everybody who’s ever been in the band can attest to that. I did start with a really romantic idea of being in a band. At

first, we all were like-minded and put in the same amount of effort and work into creating the band. We had the same goals, the same dreams at the same time.

Then of course life gets in the way, and whether it was jobs or significant others or different goals, they couldn’t tour. It kind of ebbed and flowed. The first time it started to dissolve, I was kind of brokenhearted. I was like, “The band broke up.” I thought it was over, and I was heartbroken. I was just trying to figure out what I could do, and actually ended up talking to, of all people, Joe from the Queers on the phone, who at the time I talked to regularly. And he was just like, “You write the songs, don’t you? Like music and lyrics?” And I was like, “Yeah.” And he was like, “Just get someone else.” And I was like, “All right.”

It was really hard when I first tried to put it back together. I had to learn a lot more about music than I had known. I not only had to be able to play my parts, but I had to learn everyone else’s parts so I could teach new people. It made me a better musician. When I first started City Mouse, I was basically supplying mud, like mud guitar, just guitar noise in the background. We had two guitar players. And now we can pull it off with three pieces. It definitely made me a better guitar player. It made it more like I’m the boss. I’m the one who has to make decisions. I’m the one who’s marketing the band. I’m the one who’s paying for everything. I’m the one who’s booking tours. And I absolutely don’t mind. I know that it’s a lot of work, and it would be nice, I guess, to have everybody contributing. But I feel like it’s almost impossible for anyone to join and all of a

sudden be as invested as I am. And I can’t ask that. I would never. That’s so unfair. So I try to maintain members. Nick has been in the band for a long time now. But you can’t ask them to put the same amount of time and effort into something that you’ve been doing for a long time.

Emma: What do you love about touring?

Miski: I love seeing new things. I’m a very like wonder-full person, not wonderful, but wonder-dash-full. I love seeing new things, whether it’s just a cool building or it’s meeting new people, meeting new friends. I feel like I’m way more comfortable at a show with a bunch of people that I don’t really know than I am in a room full of people that I really know. I don’t know how that works, but I’m sure it’s some kind of anxiety issue. I just like being that person who’s always traveling from town to town.

I love that every single day I have a prime directive. Get to the show. Play the show. That’s what I have to do, every day. It makes decisions so much easier. “Fix the tire or lay down in bed?” “Get a new transmission or get a job in Flagstaff?” There’s always only one option, so it’s so much easier than day-to-day life where it’s like, “How am I going to decide today which one of the six places I’m going to eat?” I almost have a mental breakdown trying to figure out those day-to-day things, like intricacies of relationships with coworkers and bosses and family and friends. It’s just so much easier to tour.

I know it seems hard. It is hard work, but in my mental process, it’s very easy. To me, this is the easiest thing in the world. Decision-making sucks. So I love the prime directive. I love having a mission. I think

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it's very military. Get there, play. Take your stuff in, take your stuff out. I get home and I'm like, "Why am I?" "What are these arms for?" "What am I supposed to do?" "Should I load all my stuff in the kitchen and walk down to the car?"

Emma: When you're driving around, that gives you space to create, too.

Miski: Absolutely. My favorite is those moments of silence when I'm driving in the middle of the night and everyone's asleep. I'll just turn off whatever music we were listening to and enjoy that peace, like I know where I'm going. I think about everything that's going on and I just know that I'm doing the right thing.

Emma: One thing that drew me to your music is that I feel like a lot of times when people write lyrics about the stuff you write lyrics about, it comes out as very abstract; I almost don't get the sense that they've actually gone through the things that they're singing about. But with your stuff, I feel like it's rooted to real experience. How, in terms of the songwriting process, do the songs come out after the experience? Immediately after? Or is it years after the experience? How do the things tie together, the events that inspire the song and then the song?

Miski: It's both. All my songs are about experience. If I start to stray from personal experience, it won't work. It just won't. I can't sing it with the same kind of emotion. It doesn't feel right to me. I feel like I'm singing a karaoke song or something, you know? I don't feel like I ever set out to write a song. If I'm thinking about something, oftentimes it'll flood my emotions a little bit and the song just kind of starts to appear there. I don't know if I started to train myself to do that more, or if it has always been that

DECISION-MAKING SUCKS. SO I LOVE THE PRIME DIRECTIVE. I LOVE HAVING A MISSION.

way. I just can't tell. But definitely, some of my songs that are still not done are about experiences that happened long before some of the songs that have been out for a while. It's definitely all over the place.

Emma: You mentioned that there's a therapeutic aspect to singing about these things. Does the therapy continue as you continue to perform them?

Miski: My feelings toward the event definitely power the song, especially when I'm performing it. It's so rare that I don't reflect on that moment when I'm singing. Because I can't not think about it—I know what it's about. And often I'm the only one who knows what it's about. It definitely affects me emotionally. I'm sure the performance gives me power over those experiences. I've come to terms with and I'm the one who healed myself. So the songs, to me, are kind of like a victory over that moment. There are definitely songs that I recorded that I can't sing, I can't get through the emotions. I'm not ready to, at least, yet. I've written them and I probably needed to write them, but there are a couple songs on the new record that I have problems singing live. I stopped doing them because I couldn't make it through without

crying. You would think that would seem to make for a good performance, but it won't. It'll just cut my voice out. I'll just cry.

Emma: Which songs?

Miski: "Guardians" is the main one. It's hard for me to get through.

Emma: I love that song so much.

Miski: I'm a baby. I'm ready to cry over it now. So I just don't do it.

Emma: You're giving power to the people listening to the music, too, to help them understand related scenarios that they've been through and help them navigate them for themselves. I kind of feel that way. When I hear these things it helps me understand and sort through stuff. And that's powerful too.

Miski: That is probably the most unexpected and most rewarding thing that's come from me playing music and writing my own music. All my life, music helped me get through so much, and then for me to realize that my music is doing the same thing, it's super bittersweet. It's heartbreaking, but also fulfilling. Once again, it's overwhelming. It's a feeling I just can't express except for saying thank you. I feel like those words aren't even enough.

I feel like when someone's identifying with me and my songs, it makes them feel

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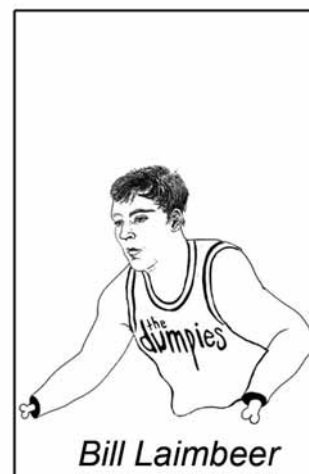
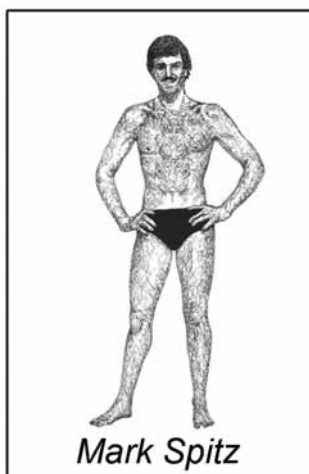


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less alone, but it also makes me feel less alone. It's powerful. Music's powerful, whether it's someone kicking rocks walking along the train tracks mad about something and listening, or someone holding tightly to their pillow and crying about some ex or something and listening. We all have our moments, and a lot of people, like me, we don't go to therapy or talk to anybody about it. But I definitely have sat there listening to sad songs over and over again. It helps. Sometimes it's the only thing you have.

Emma: So you've taken these events and created such powerful art. If you had the opportunity to undo the events so you wouldn't have to go through with them, but at the cost of losing the art that came out of them, would you?

Miski: That's not necessarily just in music, but a lot of my life. I do come from a place of a lot of trauma. Does that make me who I am? If I took away some of those experiences, would I be the same person? Would I be as grateful to be alive right now? Loss is such an important part of life. Can you live, can you really, really live, if you haven't survived?

Can you really enjoy things if you always had them, because everything is always perfect? Would you respect it? Would you have the same appreciation for everything you have?

Emma: Since you've been doing this for so long, what is your experience in terms of how women in bands are treated?

Miski: I'm really happy that things are changing. I think that people are fighting right now. People are trying to make the scene more inclusive. For a scene that's always been very anti-discrimination, I feel like there's been a lot of it. There's still a lot of it. Even in pop music, I feel like there can be so many guy bands, and a girl band is only special because it's girls. I know when I'm being treated differently, when people don't talk to me like they talk to a guy. I've gone through that. I made myself part of a very, very male-dominated scene, an extremely cis-male dominated scene: '90s punk rock. I was there for that, and I was definitely merch-girl. It's the worst two words put together. Because it means so much. It doesn't just mean you're the girl that sells merch.

I definitely feel like I forced myself in to be where I am now. But I feel like I could've been where I am now a long time ago, but people just weren't caught up yet. People who I feel did not treat me with the same respect that they treat me with now, it's like they're just noticing me for the first time, but I've always been there. I wasn't asking for your approval. It's cool that you're catching up and all, but I'm still here, I'm still doing the same stuff. I'm still doing the same amount of work. It would've been nice to have more support back then. I don't know where I would be now if I had that support back then, but I'm starting to get it.

Emma: I don't want to talk shit about Hopeless Records, but you mentioned that label. It's not known as a super diverse record label.

Miski: When those labels did have girls that were in punk bands or whatever, oftentimes they were just basically marketing their sex. It wasn't like, "Listen to these sick jams!" It was just like, "Check out this chick!" I don't know what those girls thought. I don't even know many of them, but there were some

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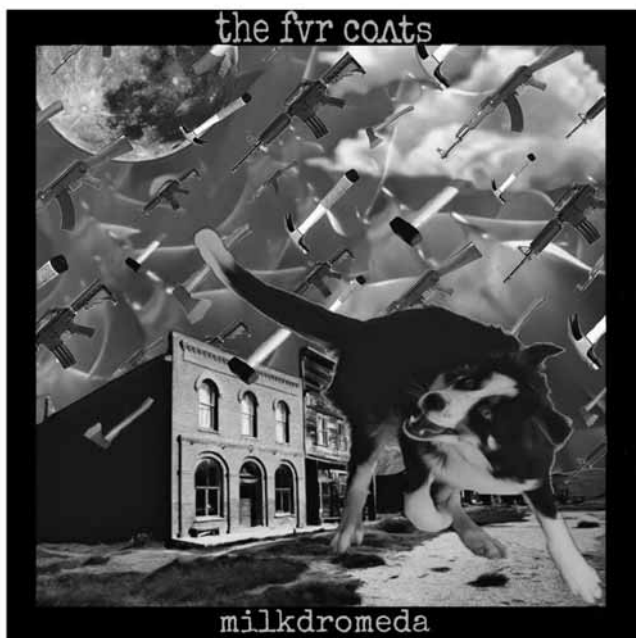
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LORIEN SMITH

bands in the '90s that I absolutely loved that didn't have that marketing aspect to them at all. And those were the bands that I thought were more real. They weren't just presenting an image.

I'm at a weird, confused point right now where I want to look attractive to myself in a mirror, that's how I want to look, but I don't want to market myself and I don't know where the line is. It's hard; it gets confusing. I'm sure that someone who's a lot more schooled or studies feminism could try to figure that out for me. I'm not really sure. I know I'm presenting myself how I want to present myself, and I want to feel attractive, I want to feel that way for me, but I also don't want to market a certain kind of image or anything to other people.

I guess I just don't want people to be into my band just because I'm a female or just because I'm dressed a certain way or whatever. But that is a lot of it. When you're a show person, you're a show person. People are going to your shows and they have eyes and they're going to see you. So it's like,

where do you draw the line? I have friends in bands that are way bigger than me, and they do promo shots and all this stuff all the time. And I have conversations with them often about it. How do we not feel like we're selling an image when we are? I'm the girl on the cover of my record. At first I felt like it was egotistical, and then I was just like, "Fuck you! I wrote those songs, it's my record!"

Emma: Yeah.

Miski: That's me. But it was really—I felt weird. I got a pang in my chest about, "Am I coming off a certain way? Am I coming off conceited?" I don't know. I'm just not in tune with that yet.

Emma: It's so hard to parse out.

Miski: It's complicated. Where's the line?

Emma: It is. And the commoditization of sexuality and beauty is just so drilled into us.

Miski: Yeah, and I don't know whose aesthetic I have, you know? Where did I learn it? I just don't know. When I look at myself in the mirror, am I looking at how I want to look or am I looking at how I want

to look to someone else? It's hard to figure out. If someone else wants to do makeup and show boobs and all that stuff, more power to them. I have my built-in insecurities about stuff like that and I'm just not sure how much I can do, what I should be doing. I just kind do it alone, I guess. But to think about it, it hurts. Image is weird.

Emma: Absolutely.

Miski: One guy once said that my band's really good and everything but I need a sexier guitar. Do you even know what that means?

Emma: That's so gross. So I do want to talk a little bit about the new record. It's the first full length, right?

Miski: Yeah.

Emma: And City Mouse has been around in one form or another for?

Miski: Since 2001.

Emma: So that's sixteen years.

Miski: Yeah.

Emma: So how are you feeling having this out?

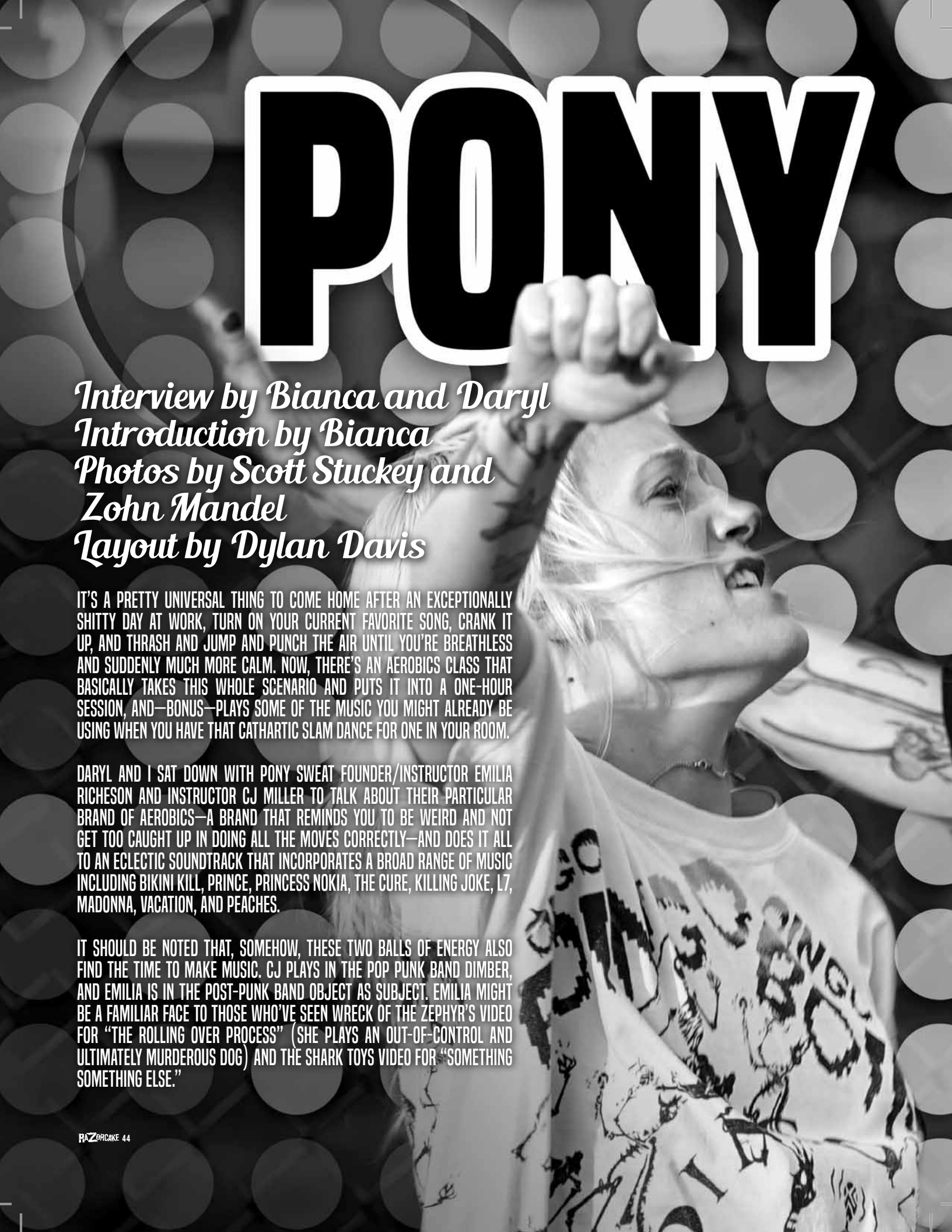
Miski: I would say it's a relief. I feel like it's a burden off my back. Not that the record was a burden, I just feel like it's something I wanted to happen and I've been trying to make happen for all of those years. I wasn't in a place physically or mentally to be able to pull all the parts together. And now I am. I mean it's called *Get Right*. There's no song on there called "Get Right." I feel like that's what that means, that I feel like I was catching up. Half of the songs are really old, the very first songs I ever did with my band.

Emma: Really?

Miski: Yeah. And the other half are songs I've been touring with steadily for the past few years that aren't on the 7" or the splits. As far as the older songs, it's just a place to finally leave them, where they're done, to give them a proper recording they deserve instead of the shitty demos we had before. And I'm probably not going to be playing them live that much. The new songs, I feel like those are just getting started. Those are definitely going to be in rotation and I'm really excited to give them a home, too. But this catches me up to the place I want to be, not just for the record or for my productivity level, but for me mentally.

Everything's coming together. I feel like I'm where I should be. Now I feel ready to go. I feel like I want to put out a record every year, and I feel like I can now. The record didn't take this long because I didn't have the songs—it took this long just from life, from going back and forth and things like that. I moved across the country several times. I feel like I finally broke the seal. I feel like I can breathe now. This whole record, I feel so much freer, just super ready to really hit it hard.

PONY



Interview by Bianca and Daryl

Introduction by Bianca

*Photos by Scott Stuckey and
Zohn Mandel*

Layout by Dylan Davis

IT'S A PRETTY UNIVERSAL THING TO COME HOME AFTER AN EXCEPTIONALLY SHITTY DAY AT WORK, TURN ON YOUR CURRENT FAVORITE SONG, CRANK IT UP, AND THRASH AND JUMP AND PUNCH THE AIR UNTIL YOU'RE BREATHLESS AND SUDDENLY MUCH MORE CALM. NOW, THERE'S AN AEROBICS CLASS THAT BASICALLY TAKES THIS WHOLE SCENARIO AND PUTS IT INTO A ONE-HOUR SESSION, AND—BONUS—PLAYS SOME OF THE MUSIC YOU MIGHT ALREADY BE USING WHEN YOU HAVE THAT CATHARTIC SLAM DANCE FOR ONE IN YOUR ROOM.

DARYL AND I SAT DOWN WITH PONY SWEAT FOUNDER/INSTRUCTOR EMILIA RICHESON AND INSTRUCTOR CJ MILLER TO TALK ABOUT THEIR PARTICULAR BRAND OF AEROBICS—A BRAND THAT REMINDS YOU TO BE WEIRD AND NOT GET TOO CAUGHT UP IN DOING ALL THE MOVES CORRECTLY—AND DOES IT ALL TO AN ECLECTIC SOUNDTRACK THAT INCORPORATES A BROAD RANGE OF MUSIC INCLUDING BIKINI KILL, PRINCE, PRINCESS NOKIA, THE CURE, KILLING JOKE, L7, MADONNA, VACATION, AND PEACHES.

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT, SOMEHOW, THESE TWO BALLS OF ENERGY ALSO FIND THE TIME TO MAKE MUSIC. CJ PLAYS IN THE POP PUNK BAND DIMBER, AND EMILIA IS IN THE POST-PUNK BAND OBJECT AS SUBJECT. EMILIA MIGHT BE A FAMILIAR FACE TO THOSE WHO'VE SEEN WRECK OF THE ZEPHYR'S VIDEO FOR "THE ROLLING OVER PROCESS" (SHE PLAYS AN OUT-OF-CONTROL AND ULTIMATELY MURDEROUS DOG) AND THE SHARK TOYS VIDEO FOR "SOMETHING SOMETHING ELSE."

SWEAT



SCOTT STUCKEY



ZOHN MANDEL

Bianca: Who are you and what is Pony Sweat?

Emilia: We—me and CJ—teach Pony Sweat. Pony Sweat is a fiercely noncompetitive dance aerobics class that I started in 2014 in Los Angeles. We teach classes in Northeast LA at different studios. We made a DVD. A lot of different kinds of different people come, and we dance around for an hour.

Daryl: What does the term “fiercely noncompetitive” mean in regards to exercising?

Emilia: It’s kind of a joke that I have about myself as being fiercely noncompetitive. We live in a pretty competitive world and city, especially, and that stuff—that feeling—leaks into rooms where people are trying to get well, like dance classes. Especially because there’s so much industry in L.A., there’s a competitive vibe in a lot of the classes, and as a fiercely noncompetitive person—there’s really not an ounce of competitive blood in my body—it can be really intimidating. I set out to have a dance space where we could all move without this idea of compare and despair, like, “This person is doing it better than me.” Sis, do you wanna say anything else?

CJ: I just think a lot of dance classes have that as a center point of the class. They almost want you to be sizing each other up. There are sections where they’ll have solo dance and you have to go in the middle and show your stuff. My minimal experience of going to other dance classes has not been a “do your own thing” and very much a sizing-up.

I think we say “fiercely noncompetitive” because it’s so outspoken and so encouraged in class to not be hard on yourself—just getting rid of the idea of “better than.” We’re all just doing it together, and so we make light of the idea to encourage people to go that way.

Daryl: It’s definitely something I related to in the sense of the local music scene—which is where all of us actually met in the first place—and how competitive that can be. How disgusting and scary it is; people stepping on each other to play certain shows.

Emilia: It’s insidious, the competitiveness. Sometimes we don’t even recognize it. The fact is that it’s pervasive in all social aspects and then we take it inside and it gets really, really confusing. We just call it out because Pony Sweat is not about that. This is not about being cool. [laughs] That’s another thing that ruins scenes.

CJ: I think that’s why we’ve maintained a friendship, because we’re part of that community, like Razorcake, that’s trying to combat that idea and actually form a community rather than just fuck each other over. Bands actually helping each other out and people at dance class actually encouraging each other to be free and weird.

Emilia: We’re encouraging each other not to be fit but to be well. That’s a huge difference. What if, in the punk scene, we were encouraging each other to just participate?

Daryl: What’s the difference between being fit and being well?

Emilia: Being “fit”—it’s semantics—but I try not to use the word “fitness” a whole lot because even though that is why a lot of people come to Pony Sweat, I don’t mean to make this of that world. The idea of “being fit” is trying to embody an ideal that is not our own, it’s something that’s fed to us. It’s another insidious part of our culture. We think we should all be skinny.

CJ: “Fit” is a slang term. It directly equates to someone being hot and what is designated as being hot is like a shitty, racist, sexist standard versus being well, which is like being healthy...

Emilia: ...and resilient!

CJ: Exercise and strength are part of being well, regardless of what your body type is, and fitness is a little bit of a loaded term in terms of denigrating different body types, versus wellness, which is for everybody.

Bianca: I took a Pony Sweat class on Monday and one of the first things that Emilia said when we were starting and doing warm-ups was that the point of Pony Sweat is to get your heart beating and your heart rate up. And I thought that was really getting to the basics of like, “Okay, this is why we’re here jumping around. We’re here so we can all sweat and leave feeling like we accomplished something.”

Emilia: I’m so glad you heard that because I don’t come from an athletic background.

Pony Sweat is a fiercely noncompetitive dance aerobics class.

I was definitely suffering through my P.E. classes. I had a lot of shame about not knowing how to run. I mean, I knew how to run with my legs, but I didn't know how to breathe and run, so running was always really painful and made me want to throw up. But to learn, "Oh, my heart beat is up. This is okay. This is what my body was meant to do. This can also bring me joy and catharsis if I stick with it for a little while. It's okay. We're not gonna die." Well, it's actually in the waiver form that dancing can cause death, so...

CJ: But no one has died! [laughs]

Bianca: I think if someone was ever almost at that point, they would feel comfortable enough in the class to be like, "I'm gonna take a seat for a minute."

Emilia: Yay!

CJ: Let's hope so.

Emilia: That's the nicest thing anyone has said about our class. I think that Pony Sweat was born from a feeling that I wanted to have, which is that same feeling that you get at a house show, or you get at your friend's birthday party of really losing yourself and getting your heart rate up, and not caring what you look like but just dancing your heart out because you love this song. How do you capture that in a class? I don't think I've done that perfectly, but I do see people go there, and I know it does do that for me.

Daryl: I've noticed that as people have gotten older, the house shows aren't as dancey as they used to be.

Emilia: Totally! This might be a tangent but, the beginnings of Pony Sweat was very much of getting in touch with my inner child. I don't know if Razorcake does a lot of writing about inner child work.

Daryl: This seems like a good place to start.

Emilia: Accessing that playfulness and those emotions that make me want to move and expressing myself with my body. I don't get a lot of opportunities to do that, and I certainly wasn't getting the opportunity to do that at the fucking gym.

CJ: Part of what we're trying to do with the class is provide something for everyone, something that's accessible. But a big cross-section of the class is our community, like queers and weirdos and punks and stuff. Everyone comes.

We're trying to combat a lot of different mentalities but also that mentality that we (everyone in the room) come from, where we all met, that you're not cool if you work out.

Especially, like we were saying, in rock music, it's almost like the emphasis is on being unhealthy—smoking cigarettes, drinking, doing drugs—which are not things that I think make you cool in any capacity, and which really are robbing so many people of strength and their ability to do things that are important and survive. These are really trying times where everyone really needs to be strong and survive and I think we're trying to get it out there that everyone should be taking care of themselves.

I get a lot of anxiety doing athletic things. I'm not gonna go to any old gym. Creating a space that feels like a show and we're dancing—but we're all exercising and doing things to get stronger—that part of it is really important. Getting people out to exercise who haven't felt comfortable exercising before and providing a space to do that, making it okay for punks to come. They don't have to wear Spandex. We have plenty of Ponies (Pony Sweat devotees) who come in cut-offs and shredded Mercyful Fate shirts and stuff. And that's cool. Coming there to feel comfortable as a punk or a rocker is important because we're fed the opposite a lot of the time, that that's not something we should be doing. It's definitely something we should all be doing.

Emilia: We should all be doing aerobics.

Daryl: All right, so, take someone like me, for example, who has never moved around or danced like that, and who really has a strong urge in me not to do that, but it's definitely for the best that I am active in that way. What do you tell someone like that to try and get them motivated to take the step into aerobics?

Emilia: This question comes up more often than you think! 'Cause not everybody wants to do aerobics, which blows my mind! [laughs] I wanna note that it takes an enormous amount of bravery to start exercising, and it takes an enormous amount of courage to continue to exercise until you find a thing that your body likes to do.

My body likes to do aerobics. I feel really lucky I found that. My body doesn't like to do a lot of other exercising. So, I would say to call upon every brave cell in your body and know that when you're at Pony Sweat, you're in a non-judgmental space. Above all—above *all*—the space is non-judgmental and so you can come and at the very least, if you're moving your feet to the beat of the music, you're going to get your heart rate up and you'll probably like one or two of the songs. You'll see some really friendly people, and you would have participated. I don't think you would go back to your car and cry. I really hope not. That's kind of like my worst nightmare. If that happens to anybody, I hope they tell me so we can talk about what happened.

Anyway, we don't have to love everything, but if we don't try anything new ever, then we don't get to find out. Trying new stuff is so scary. Doing stuff that we're not "good at" is so scary. When I started aerobics, I wasn't good at it. When I started Pony Sweat, I didn't know how to teach aerobics. Noah (Wolf, of Wreck Of The Zephyr) was the one who was like "Fuck it. We have a space and you have friends. Just put together a routine and teach it to us." So I did. We started meeting once a week and doing that over and over again. Eventually, strangers came. Well, they weren't strangers—they were friends of friends.

Daryl: If you see someone at a show, and you go talk to them about Pony Sweat, what is it that you saw in them that made you want to tell them about Pony Sweat?

Emilia: I mean usually [laughs] because folks in our community know each other. It's in us to know our own kind. To be like, "I see

you.” If I see a misfit, I usually want to do aerobics with them.

CJ: Your question resonates for me because when I first started coming to Pony Sweat, I didn’t really know a lot of people there. I love dancing, especially in my bedroom alone. I do it all the time. But dancing in public has always been a little bit of a problematic issue for me because I felt uncomfortable in my body for so long.

When I found Pony Sweat, it was right smack dab in the middle of my transitioning and coming out and stuff regarding gender stuff. I was feeling really weird about my body because I had lived a lifetime of being programmed to be in costume as a man for so long. My movement was something that made me super uncomfortable. Dancing has always been so free, but even in dancing, I felt like I had to move in a certain way that was contrary to what I wanted to do. Going into this class, I was so scared the first time I went in there. I was in the back, kinda hiding, and it became apparent to me really quickly—and I know this sounds silly and kind of cliché—but I recognized it as being a true safe space where everyone was taking care of each other there. Not like an overly insincere way, but it felt like everyone was welcome to do what they wanted, and I felt like no one was going to judge me.

It was a way for me to go and de-program my body, to move how I wanted to move instead of how I’d been told I had to move my whole life. It was such a euphoric experience of dancing in front of people how I wanted to dance. It was like, “Okay, this is a place where we can do that and no one cares.” In fact, the opposite: everyone is excited to go there and be as weird as possible.

Emilia: Yeah, big-time. People really want you to get weird.

CJ: [to Emilia] Why don’t you tell the origins of the class?

Emilia: I had been teaching for a couple years and then....

CJ: But you started it yourself, though.

Emilia: Well, Noah made me do it.

Daryl: I remember Noah brought over a bunch of blank T-shirts and a screen to my house, and I silkscreened the first Pony Sweat shirts. And I was like, “What is this?” He explained it to me and I was like, “Uh... all right. I don’t know what you’re talking about, but whatever.”

Emilia: Noah and I, we’d been friends for a pretty long time and I had been in a really deep depression for a few years. I knew that exercise really helped me with my depression but I just could not fucking will myself to do it. Noah just called me up one day and said, “I rented a space in four months. Put together this routine and teach it to us.”

I had every reason not to, but in those four months I got more excited. It was so fun to think about what songs I wanted to pick and make up dances to. Meanwhile, we talked about what it would be called. A friend said, “You definitely have to put ‘sweat’ in the title because you sweat so much.”

Noah and I worked for years together in the kitchen at Auntie Em’s Kitchen, which was a café in Eagle Rock that’s no longer there. One day he was like, “What about Pony Sweat?” And I was like, “Fuck yeah, that’s the name! Duh!” He had our friend Annika draw up that logo and then made those shirts with you. That first class, he brought all those T-shirts. I have an immense amount of gratitude for a friend who believed in me and encouraged me so hard. It’s crazy.

CJ: It’s that total DIY, econo thing where you just got a fucking space and started

doing it. In the same way where when we start throwing shows, you just find a basement or you find a space and you hope people come. It goes to show, it doesn’t need to just be shows—you could start your own dance aerobics class.

Emilia: You absolutely can. Then CJ started coming a year and a half ago?

CJ: Maybe two years ago?

Emilia: She’s so magnetic. Her moves are so good. Exactly what she said before—she came and she danced with abandon and she embodied the spirit of what I wanted Pony Sweat to be: for us to come and make these moves our own and to express ourselves physically. It had been on my mind that it would be really nice to have somebody else who could teach with me so I could start teaching more classes. Classes were getting kinda full and I really needed some help!

And this idea came from inside—this bubble of a thought—like, “You should ask CJ, you should ask CJ.” And she said yes, and then we trained a lot. Quote unquote “trained.”

CJ: Yeah we did. We had ‘80s montage training classes together.

Emilia: We totally did *Buffy* or *Dirty Dancing*-style montage.

Bianca: She’s a maniac.

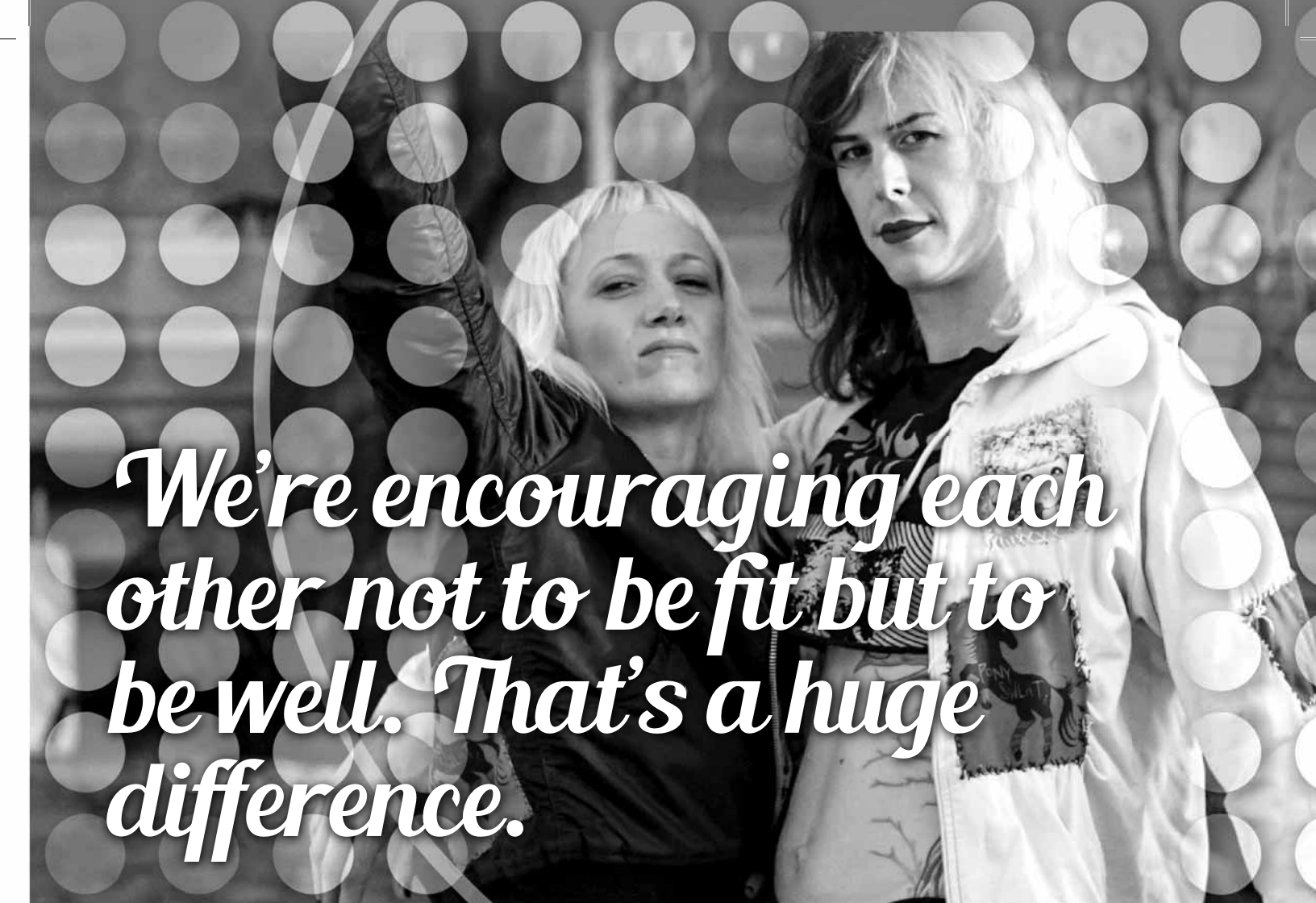
CJ: Me getting frustrated and throwing a towel or leotard in the corner.

Emilia: I wish we had filmed so we could have done an actual montage. I hope this doesn’t sound like I’m bragging because I’m not, but a lot of Ponies would say, “No one can teach Pony Sweat but Emilia!” And then as soon as people got word that I was training somebody, they were all like, “It’s CJ. I know it’s CJ. CJ’s the only other one who could teach Pony Sweat.”

CJ: It was funny because right when our training was happening, we didn’t tell anyone

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We're encouraging each other not to be fit but to be well. That's a huge difference.

SCOTT STUCKEY

about it for a while. I found out about Pony Sweat from my friend Lauren, who plays in bands. We were just hanging out one night and it just came up in conversation. My ears perked up, like, "Whoa, what dance class? That sounds cool. Tell me more!" I have a really distinct memory of her showing me "Arrow" (one of the Pony Sweat dance steps) on the street in Highland Park.

Then I went onto the website and I saw the really cool promo video that Emilia has on there, and I was like, "Oh my god, I know her!" Me and Daryl and Emilia were all at this wedding in the woods together before we were all friends. There were a lot of people there who are close to me now, who I didn't know at the time. And I saw Emilia and her partner Lisaida at this wedding and didn't know them—and I was like, "Those are my people." And Emilia had this amazing outfit on and I was like, "Shit, I wish I was wearing that outfit." So I had wedding outfit jealousy. But I'm pretty shy so we didn't really talk. We ended up on the dance floor together and slowly, at one point in the night, we were dancing toward each other and I remember kind of having that connection with someone and then it went almost half a year before I saw her again. And then I showed up at Pony Sweat and was like, "It's you!"

Emilia: I was so excited. We really are just an '80s movie.

Daryl: Hallelujah.

CJ: And I just started coming to class so much that Emilia was like, "You come to class so much. Do you want to teach it?" [laughs] Naw, she asked me to get coffee and I thought I was in trouble. [laughs] And then we cried a lot. And now I'm an aerobics instructor and it's the best.

Bianca: You said that Pony Sweat did a promo video with Pancake Mountain. Do you wanna talk a little about that?

Emilia: Yeah! It just got taken down from YouTube, but we had clearance and then apparently something changed with Flock Of Seagulls. Which is so embarrassing because Scott (Stuckey), the creator of Pancake Mountain and the director of this Pony Sweat video, he really doesn't like Flock Of Seagulls and we've argued about it many times. So the fact that that's the song that got it taken off hurts a little extra for me. It'll be back!

But yeah, through this amazing thing—musicians started to come to class and one of those musicians is this woman Laura Bird from DC. She approached me with her friend Brie, and they were like, "We want to make a weird art aerobics video," and I said, "Okay, let's do that!" And then two months later,

Laura called me and asked if I'd ever heard of Pancake Mountain.

I've been a huge fan of Pancake Mountain, and during the time where I was pretty depressed, I would often think about Pancake Mountain as like, "Man I wish I could do something cool like a kids show with the puppets." It was a real thing for me, so I told her, yeah, I'd definitely heard of them. She said that they shoot out here in L.A. now, they have a studio, and they have time. Scott was really into the idea of making this aerobics video, and Laura was like, "Do you wanna just make it with them?" And I was like "YEAAAAH!!!" It's still so insane that that happened. That show means a lot to me, and Scott got it—he understood what Pony Sweat was trying to do, which is like build community and bridges.

CJ: And it's "inner child."

Emilia: Yeah, totally.

CJ: Inner child if your babysitter was in The Meat Puppets.

Emilia: Exactly!

CJ: Yeah, that's what Pancake Mountain is and also what the Pony Sweat video is. When I first saw it, I thought, "Oh, this is awesome. It's like Pee-Wee's Playhouse but also at an Oingo Boingo show," and with Emilia teaching everyone dance aerobics.

If I see a misfit, I usually want to do aerobics with them.

Emilia: So we're gonna make another one, but there's a lot of obstacles.

Bianca: Flock Of Seagulls?

Emilia: We're not gonna ever make another video with Flock Of Seagulls' music. I'm pretty sure that I lose on that one.

CJ: But we'd like to expand on it and make it a little bit bigger in some ways than the first one. And yeah, it's hard to do such a thing in the DIY operation that is Pony Sweat to make a feature-length, hour-long aerobics video.

Daryl: So this is for people to train to at home?

Emilia: Oh yeah, for people to do at home.

Daryl: So it's just on YouTube and people can watch it?

Emilia: Yeah! Well, it was. And it was crazy.

CJ: It was totally free.

Emilia: We got like 10,000 views in the first week! Having that come out of my mouth feels disgusting, but I learned through this experience that that's kind of a big deal. It got taken down, and the way I found out it had gotten taken down was that people emailed me. This woman emailed me from Texas, "Where is it?"

It's so cool because we wondered, "Will this work for people at home?" I grew up in a really rural area in Vermont and in the '90s there weren't a lot of freaks on TV, so when I think about the video, I just get really excited. I grew up idolizing Richard Simmons, and I still do, clearly, because those videos are so great. You see the people behind him, his dancers, and you pick out your favorite ones. His outfits are so good. I wanted to make a video like that—that people could see themselves in, and I think we did that. And I'm really bummed that it's not on the internet now, but it'll be back, and it's free, and you can just watch it.

CJ: It's an extension of this access thing that we were talking about earlier. We want Pony Sweat to be accessible for everyone. Emilia has structured the classes so that they're very inexpensive compared to other dance classes. We also have the idea that no one will ever be turned away for lack of funds from class. We want people to be there and to get well together.

For me, the video was such a cool thing because it was like crossing geographical borders in terms of accessibility. Also, I sent it

to my friend Christi. She called me crying. "I used to do dance aerobics with my sister in the late '80s and this immediately transported me to that." She does it all the time in New York in her apartment. I just think it's a cool thing for people to do at home. There are plenty of people who don't live in an area like Los Angeles where we're so privileged to have access to so many cool things like a weirdo, queer, punk dance aerobics class. There are plenty of places and towns where no one has that, but you can do it in your room.

Daryl: Especially kids out there who don't even know that something like that is possible, just stumbling across it on the internet.

Emilia: Exactly!

Daryl: Have you ever had any My Little Pony fans hit you up?

Emilia: Surprisingly, no.

Daryl: Because it seems like something they'd really be into.

Emilia: Not to toot our own horns, but we definitely are becoming like another pony subculture—albeit a tiny one in Los Angeles—not nearly as big as, say, Bronies or My Little Pony. But no.

CJ: We all self-identify as Ponies and call each other that.

Daryl: "Friendship is magic."

Emilia: Yeah, right?! There is a lot of that.

Bianca: Going back to the idea of the classes, it's one thing to say, "You can come here, you can be yourself, this is a place where you can be comfortable and you're not judged," but it's another thing to make people actually believe that, especially people who really don't believe that. There are people like me who are very much like, "I am judging myself at all times. I don't understand how you, a stranger, are going to convince me not to judge myself in this very public space with a wall of mirrors."

CJ: Totally.

Bianca: And I was really impressed because there is constant reinforcement in different ways of like, "Don't forget not to care!" Is that something that you did in the video and is that something that you deliberately try to do all the time? Or is that just because it was a big class?

Emilia: When it's a big class, and especially when there are a lot of newer folks, it's important to say it a lot more. That was

something that—as classes grew and we started adding more classes—I would talk to my friends Noah and Lisaida about because it was this thing that was worrying me. We were getting a lot of regulars, so people were learning the moves and getting "good at it." Like, there's no such thing as being "good at it" except going there and getting weird.

CJ: Getting comfortable and getting weird.

Emilia: That means, wow, they've really succeeded. But recognizing that that doesn't happen in every class, that doesn't maybe happen in your first class, how do we make sure that that rings true all the time, regardless of whether people in the front row know all the moves? What everybody always said to me was, "You just have to keep saying it." You just have to keep saying "Fuck the moves," that it's fiercely non-competitive, that we're just here to get our heart rates up and listen to music together.

So yeah, we do say it a lot because we also need reminders. When I go to a class, and when I'm learning something new, I might get a brief moment where I'm not judging myself—like a really brief moment—but pretty quickly, the voice comes back. So I need constant reminders. And the other thing that we say in class is that we're just practicing that together: We're practicing getting comfortable and not judging ourselves together. It's not necessarily something that we get right away, but we practice it in that space.

CJ: It's work, like anything else. Like breaking down those things that inhibit us from being comfortable, being ourselves, out in the world. Something we try to emphasize in class goes back to what I was saying about when I first showed up there. I was a weird, super-awkward, giant trans girl in the back, trying to figure it out, and it became apparent to me through constant reinforcement, like, "Oh you can come here and you can work on yourself." You can work on feeling okay being yourself and getting stronger, but emphasis on "work." It doesn't come easily. We have to practice it because constantly out in the world we're having all these things forced on us and put into this little mold, and in order to break out of that in even the tiniest, minuscule way is really, really tough. Because you're just one person against a



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whole flux of societal information being shoved at you.

I was really nervous about filling Emilia's sneakers when I started doing the class. It was funny because Emilia and her partner Lisaida went on vacation and I started teaching earlier than I thought I was going to, and I was really scared about it. And I went back to that thought of, "How am I ever going to be Emilia?" I realized, "Oh no, I just have to be myself." And that is what I think I could give as a teacher—what Emilia and the class gave to me—which was permission to be myself. Being really vocal and talking about those things and trying to impart my experience with the class to people. "I know you're frustrated, I know you're uncomfortable." We're looking at this frickin' wall of mirrors, which is a nightmare for some people. And to be like, "None of this matters but everything matters," and to marry those ideas. And I think that's really difficult for us to do in this country. It resonated for me, when I was in the back, feeling weird also.

Emilia: Pony Sweat gave me permission to be myself too.

Daryl: That non-judgmental environment is like punk in its most idyllic sense and so much of the time, it isn't that at all. Maybe it isn't because people don't talk about it and don't reinforce these ideas that are supposed to be actual in punk spaces. I think it's just good that in your class, you actually talk about it and make sure that everyone's okay. Imagine if you went to a punk show and there were people who were trying to make sure that everyone felt good at that punk show.

Emilia: Well, I know that I go to shows—

and if any bands speak to our experience as spectators—just to have that connection. I do think that if there was more verbal acknowledgement of, "Hey, clap for your neighbor!" [laughs] That's something we always say at Pony Sweat. If they just said that at punk shows, I think everybody would feel way better.

It also comes down to introducing ourselves to people who are new, and making sure that everybody is seen and gets acknowledged. That happens in the punk scene. It happens in the queer scene too. People make so many assumptions. I think a lot of folks are shy and even the ones who have been in a scene for a really long time and know everybody are shy to approach people who are new and be like, "Hey! Who are you? Where are you from? Have you been here before?" It feels really dangerous sometimes.

Daryl: Meeting new people definitely gets harder the older you get. Especially if you don't have common ground, or you don't smoke cigarettes.

Emilia: Totally! It was so much easier when we smoked cigarettes.

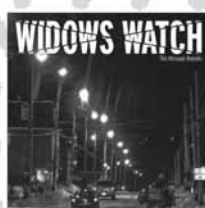
CJ: Or drink or whatever. Removing it from an alcohol- or drug-related thing, it's really brave to just talk to a stranger. I used to go to shows all the time at an all-ages space that had no drinking and people weren't smoking cigarettes, and I would just bring a book. I would go and see a bunch of noise bands like four times a week and I'd just sit there by myself and read a book by myself between bands. Because I'm a shy girl, and these were people who were definitely other weirdos who I could have connected with.

So many assumptions get made. When I was growing up and a younger lady, I had such an idealized version of what punk was. And it was like hearing The Minutemen talk about, "It's whatever you want it to be" and also, "Oh cool, these are people who are championing for human rights and animal rights and accessibility for queer people and people with inhibited mobility" and talking about all these things. Then as I got older, I was like, "Oh shit, no one in the punk scene is talking about this." I actually just had this fairytale depiction of what it was and most of the time it's not that because I think people are lazy about doing the work and actively talking about it, challenging these ideals, and resting on what came before.

And I think it's gotten us into this trap of a lot of punks I know. Some of them are the best people I've ever met and some of them are the worst people I've ever met. [laughs] They're just inhabiting this community that should be this incredible thing and they're freaking racist or they're just shitty. They say horrible things about women or whatever. At some point, the crown fell off of it for me, but I never lost the joy and hope of what it could be.

That's going back to what I was saying about Pony Sweat being this ultimate safe space. It really feels like the best punk show where everyone's taking care of each other and no one's caring if I get my sweat on them, which I did a lot in the early classes when I was spinning and it was flying off of my hair and I was like really self-conscious of sweating so much. Finally, I was like, "Oh wait, no one cares." It was like when you have those best moments of talking

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I grew up idolizing Richard Simmons, and I still do, clearly.



SCOTT STUCKEY

about these things and coming together to be stronger and better together. That's the best thing about a house show, and what I hope people get in class sometimes.

Bianca: At this point, you gals have a lot of classes under your belts. Is there anything that sticks out as a particularly golden moment?

CJ: My timeline is not as long as Emilia, but when I first started teaching classes, I was so nervous and it was really awkward for me. The thing that was the scariest for me was not actually the dance teaching but getting up in the beginning of class and framing the class, trying to impart the ideas about the music that we were sharing or these ideals.

It's always really nerve-wracking for me, being honest and talking about those sorts of things and coming across not sounding like a total idiot. I'm always judging myself for it, but I think that's an important thing for our class: talking about things outside of class and the way that we practice things in class that we can take outside into the world in terms of being stronger and being uninhibited and caring for your community and your neighbors.

I know it sounds silly in a dance class, but it resonates in the music and in this thing we're talking about of just breaking down why we think the things we do about ourselves and about other people. I would get so nervous about it, and then I got into a little bit of a groove with it. One particular day, I was having a really silly, weird day, which are often the best Pony Sweat days, and I had this woman come up to me after class, and she said to me—and I'm probably going to cry as I say this—that the first time in ten years that she ever felt good about her body was after this Pony Sweat class and we kind of just held each other and cried a bunch. For someone to relate that to me was more than I could ever hope for in anything that I've ever done in my life. Something I said helped someone to feel love for themselves and love their body despite the world telling them they're not beautiful. That was the fucking best.

Daryl: That's amazing.

CJ: One really sticks with me, because it was a time when I was having a lot of self-doubt about my ability to be an instructor. I had never taught anything before, and then I'm teaching this dance aerobics class that meant the world to me. I cared so much. I was so worried that I was gonna fuck it up. And then this person came and talked to me and I was like, "Oh. I think I'm doing it okay."

Emilia: "I did it right!"

CJ: I did it right.

Emilia: I mean, that's the answer you should go with.

CJ: What's your memory?

Emilia: Pony Sweat has been the absolute best time of my life. It's its own breathing thing, and so it changes. In the last year, it's changed. I'll just go with the first thing I thought of when you said that, which is when we discover things about songs. We dance to the routine for a whole month, so we become familiar with the songs in a different way than when we listen to them in our cars or even at home. I don't always intentionally put playlists together based on what's going on in the world, but after the election last year, I know that that November we danced to—and again, not on purpose, because the playlist had been set before the results had come in—but that month we danced to Bruce Springsteen's "Dancing in the Dark" and followed it with X-Ray Spex's "Oh Bondage Up Yours!" I like Bruce Springsteen, but I've never been a huge fan.

CJ: Lisaida's gonna be mad.

Emilia: [laughs] My partner loves Bruce Springsteen, but I just never really connected. But I wanted to dance to that song and because of where it was in the playlist. Next to the X-Ray Spex song, it was really, really powerful and cathartic. I felt so many of us in class were heartbroken and scared and angry and all the things that we kind of always are, but it was the extra icing on the cake for all that to happen.

"Dancing in the Dark" is so fucking powerful. "I ain't nothin' but tired, I'm just tired and bored with myself." Are those even

the lyrics? I don't know. But dancing to that line is so powerful in my body, and to get to express ourselves physically is not something that we get to do a whole lot. That shifted things a little bit for Pony Sweat. I felt like there was kind of a permission that everyone started to give themselves to work things out a little bit more in class.

CJ: We're always taught to have freedom of thought—like, punk is whatever you want it to be!—but it's rare, I think, that people talk about freedom of movement. One of the insidious ways that we get programmed by society is through our movement. For me and my movement, I became aware of it really when I came out about being transgender and having such awful gender dysphoria, looking at my body and hating myself.

A big part of it was how I moved. I moved differently than I wanted to and I was like, "Fuck, my whole life, I've been told, 'You can't do that. You're moving like a girl,'" like that was some fucking insult. But it made me change the way that I moved and wanted to inhabit my body. We're not given the space to move how we want to move.

When you're a little kid, you can do whatever the hell you want but at some point people are like, "You gotta act your age," and you can't spin around in the grocery store or grapevine down the aisle if you feel like it. You should be able to do that if you feel like it, but our bodies are controlled in that way. The idea of freedom of movement, for me, was a huge thing. It saved my life, being able to learn to deprogram myself in that way. It was just something I had never really thought a lot about, just body movement.

Emilia: There's a movement of dance classes called "No Lights, No Lycra," where you just turn off all the lights and just dance for yourself. The fact that those classes exist speaks to the idea that we want to be free. Pony Sweat isn't super radical in that way—like, you walk into the room and you know you're in a class. People dance in rows. We're all facing the mirror. There's a set routine.

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ZOHN MANDEL

But the reason why that is is because there's a part of me that likes to be told what to do when I'm trying something new. I like to be shown things. With dancing, I've found it to be really freeing and empowering when your body learns a new thing. It's kind of crazy when that happens. To learn a new step is like, "Oh wow, I fucking learned that!" That's one of the reasons why we do what we do in class.

And also, I think that moving our bodies in different ways than we're used to opens our minds to the possibilities of what our physicality can be and what it can possibly do. We always say, "If something we do up here doesn't feel empowering in your body, do something else." Or, "Recycle this move in your body—how does your body express this movement?" It's a lot to pack into a fucking aerobics class.

CJ: But there is strength in the vocabulary, like in so many things we do. You learn techniques so you can take them and make them your own. Or break them down. But getting that foundation is empowering in every way. You learn to do something so you can take it, internalize it, and make it your own.

Daryl: Yeah, that's maybe not something someone's going to know how to do the first class, but once they catch the vibe and get in the swing of it, you're just opening up all these doors for people.

Emilia: I hope so.

Bianca: I think, too, that if I had gone into that class the very first time and it was just like, "Do whatever!," there's no way I would've been jumping half as much. I would not have been pivot turning. [laughs]

Emilia: I have a hard time losing myself just because someone tells me to. I need a little bit of a warm up.

Daryl: Do you have advice for someone who maybe wants to be more active and wants some kind of exercise in their life but doesn't know where to start?

Emilia: Yeah! Ask for help. Ask your friends. If you don't have any friends, and

there's somebody who you know and you like what you see them doing, go ask them if they can show you. Reach out a hand and introduce yourself. Say, "Hi, I don't know how to do this thing and I maybe want to get into it. Could you tell me how you got into it?" But I think that help is needed.

I started doing aerobics at a treatment center when I was twenty-seven. This woman came and taught us aerobics at 6:30 AM on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I had done aerobics when I was a kid but I hadn't moved my body like that in a really long time. I loved her and she was in her sixties. She moved like a little fairy. She was just rad. She would come with a boom box and put on music that I didn't really love, but it was okay; she got us all moving.

The thing is, I connected with what she was doing. I went and I asked her for help and she kind of mentored me. I think that's the best way. In my experience, I cannot rely on myself solely to learn something new and to get myself over that hump of doing something really hard because I'm too judgmental of myself. I've tried running so many times in my life and it would just beat me down so hard, so quick.

Also, good advice that was given to me about exercising is to set really manageable goals. When I was trying to get back into exercising, I had a friend who is a trainer tell me, "Just make a goal of exercising once a week. Not three times a week, not five times a week, not every day. Just try to do it once a week or twice a month." Really give yourself the room to find your way.

CJ: It's really hard when you're trying to get back into it, especially if you're in a rut of depression or physically feeling down because of an injury or whatever. There are these impressions that we have to be a certain way, like, "Oh, I gotta work out all the time," and then you don't have the time. Then you get upset and down on yourself and the whole thing falls and it's that much harder to get back up again. But if you allow yourself the time to do it in a manageable way, it becomes easier and less totally soul-crushing.

There are places like the YMCA, community centers, accessible classes in certain places. If you wanna just put on headphones and blast Descendents in your bedroom and dance around like crazy for an hour, that's getting your heart rate up. That's exercise. That's what I was doing before I found Pony Sweat: dancing aggressively in my bedroom, jumpin' around. I don't necessarily want to go to a dance class and dance to Katy Perry. But I think what's cool about this class is music is such a powerful thing for getting you to move and get out of your body. That feeling of being at shows and getting wild, that comes from music; it's not just the human-on-human connection. If you can use that to motivate yourself in some way, whether it's at class or just in your bedroom, I think that's really important.

There are so many things about Pony Sweat that resonated for me, but I was like, "Oh my god, this is so cool, we're dancing to X-Ray Spex. We're dancing to Robyn. We're dancing to The Cure," which is the all-time favorite band for me and Emilia. Oh my god, if The Cure comes on, this girl is *dancing!* [laughs]

Emilia: Especially for readers of this zine, music is the way in. My body won't do the things that it does in class without those songs. The music gets you there. I would always say, "If you can dance for twenty minutes in your room to your favorite songs, then that's a really good start."

CJ: That's something that most of us—no everyone—could find: twenty minutes to listen to music that is inspiring to us, and let yourself move to it. That's a good start.

UPDATE: *The Pony Sweat video is back up on Vimeo and can be seen here:*
vimeo.com/249090878



NATHAN STEPHENS-GRIFFIN



Acoustic two-piece One Night Stand In North Dakota have been a fixture of the U.K.'s underground and DIY punk scene for over a decade. The band hails from Pity Me, a little ex-mining village in the Durham suburbs in the North East of England, with new album *We Wilt, We Bloom* issued by Specialist Subject in the U.K. and Salinas in the U.S.

They've played the "leftfield" stage at Glastonbury, hand-picked by Billy Bragg—and they kind of sound a bit like Billy Bragg—but with more hooks, more frantic guitar shred, and Pit Yakker accents. They used to share a label with AJJ, which is a good music launching point, too.

Both are members of Martha—the queer pop punk five-piece that also includes Nathan's sister Naomi and former label buddy JC as songwriters. Where Martha are much better known, having sold out shows around the U.K. and been issued as a centerfold poster in U.K. rock mag *Kerrang!* ONSIND remain a smaller prospect; touring the U.K. with just two people and their guitars.

ONSIND have carried themes of social justice through several albums and EPs. The songs go straight for the throat in terms of vividly showing how illness or poverty can blight lives. Yet, lyrically the songs aren't just about transmitting a sociology textbook to chords, or fitting a *Jacobin* article to a melody. The tunes are couched in stories of real experience. They are full of beautiful anecdotes and moments described with painter-eyed clarity: taking the belongings from a home of a person hospitalized with mental illness; listening to an old relative at a funeral hold forth on their political convictions; watching the leaves fall from a houseplant season to season and ruminating on mortality. ONSIND are brave enough to look at some of the darkest parts of modern life in the eye, but they're also brave enough to make something beautiful, funny, and profound from those same dark parts.

I caught up with the band in Nathan's offices where he works as an academic at Durham University. We talked about how a person can cope with the wilting and blooming periods of life and about how DIY has changed since ONSIND first picked up a pair of guitars.

INTERVIEW BY DAVID LITTLEFAIR

**PHOTOS BY ANDY DOWSON,
CARL FARRUGIA, SANDY GILL,
SUZY HARRISON &
NATHAN STEPHENS-GRIFFIN**

LAYOUT BY ERIC BASKAUSKAS



ANDY DOWSON



SANDY GILL

We don't have any
overt influences, but
it's all underpinned
by some ideological
worldview and
**IDEALS OF EQUALITY,
VIRTUE, AND
LIBERATION.**

CARL FARRUGIA



David: Nathan, in the time you've been in this band you've studied for a PhD and you're now a professional academic. I was wondering whether you have an academic, philosophical inspiration behind the songs you write.

Nathan: We used to have, when we were more insufferable. We used to have very direct influences and I suppose that served a purpose at the time. For instance, talking about the idea of a "Panopticon" in a song (a prison designed by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham, later used conceptually to illustrate ideas of social control by Michel Foucault). Ideas go through a process of becoming well known. Every concept that is commonly known to people was at one stage mystified in some way. You can say there's a virtue of singing about it because it helps people. I know that I listened to screamo bands when I was younger that might have helped me find out about The Frankfurt School (a school of social theory and philosophy associated in part with the Institute for Social Research at the Goethe University Frankfurt) or whatever, but now I'd rather see ONSIND tell stories.

Daniel: And definitely not use jargon, make it more accessible. Why would you want to do that if it's more about showing off?

Nathan: "Show don't tell." "I want to talk about this thing, but how can I describe a scene that says something?" That's a product of both of us having written a lot of songs for a long time and hopefully getting better at it and wanting to do new things. We don't have any overt influences, but it's all underpinned by some ideological worldview and ideals of equality, virtue, and liberation.

David: Regarding those stories you tell—a lot of the music you make has a really overt social justice angle. How do you keep exploring new themes after ten years or so as a band?

Nathan: Lyrically, I've never really had a dry spell, but that doesn't mean it has all been good. We haven't released a record in four years, but we've released two albums and 7" s in other bands. But the division of labor in ONSIND is typically that I write the lyrics and Daniel keeps things interesting.

Daniel: For this album I went down to the studio for a weekend on my own and we got the guitars and stuff down alone.

Nathan: That's a point of trust. There were work things where I couldn't go, but I trust

Daniel totally. There are piano lines on the record I never knew would be there that are totally great. I find it harder, through my own musical limitations, to find new ways to write a song.

Daniel: Even with that, there are only so many chords. We're doing a Martha album at the same time and it's like going through the same thing again.

Nathan: There's an early ONSIND song—don't listen to it. The title's French because we were pretentious, but it's about trying to write songs when you feel you've said everything already. That's because I'd been in a ska band for five years.

Daniel: And you peaked too early.

Nathan: And I was trying to figure out how to write songs in a new way without upstrokes in every verse [laughs].

David: The first song on the album, "Magnolia," seems to have a lot of the record's themes encapsulated in it. When I read the lyrics, I thought, "This is a song about taking the good and bad together and the coming and going of good things."

Nathan: It was written when I was living in a house with a Magnolia tree in the front garden. They piss leaves every three months, going from this beautiful to emaciated thing so quickly. I lived in this house with an ex and wrote that before we split up, but since then realized it was kind of about us splitting up.

There's another song on the album called "Truth Emerges from the Well," which is about seeing friends come and go over the years, and having this strange, distant relationship with other cities and places—where you play one year, then return the next and the people you made friends with aren't friends with each other anymore, and you don't know how to navigate it. The hubris of being young and punk and thinking things are gonna stay the same forever. It's a sad song in some ways because we're a band that's been going for a long time at the same level. We've seen a lot of people come and go and have seen a lot of our musical contemporaries break up. But I understand it; the things that bring you into punk, with age, become less important to you and you find you're tied to people with less strong bonds.

Daniel: And it's not bad—the coming and going of bands—it's kind of sad and fine, but it does happen.

Nathan: A lot of people heard that song and assumed it was written about Chris Clavin of Plan-it-X Records. We've even had some people praise us for writing about it, but the honest truth is it wasn't written about that. We wrote it and recorded it before we were aware of any allegations against Chris. I don't want to say much, because I really feel like the discussion should be led by the survivors and it feels like I'm trivializing or exploiting the situation to even talk about it. All I'd really say is that it's so very important to support and believe survivors always and to respect their wishes in those situations, which is what we have tried to do. Sorry I

don't have anything more profound to say about it than that.

David: Previous ONSIND records have spread a narrative about a given character across a whole album and told their story. Is that the same here?

Nathan: This album came together more as individual songs. The last album, I wanted it very much to be songs about a particular character. This record was more thematically circular, only this time the character in the songs is me [laughs], which is something I've not really written about in ONSIND. When we started, we decided we didn't want to write about "going on tour."

Daniel: Especially two guys with acoustics.

Nathan: We always said we wanted to write about real things outside of our world. But then with this record I feel that I'm outside of that now too. I don't feel part of a scene. I feel like I can contribute, but my day-to-day existence is now much more about other things. The scene is something nice to take part in but it's also something far away.

David: If it's an album about you, then it seems like a lot of this album is about processing where your punk identity is going as you move into an era of life when there's an attrition of punk idealism.

Nathan: This album's about the passage of time. Since the last album I've turned thirty, and now thirty-two. It'd be lying to say that didn't influence it, but if there's an underlying message to it, it should be that you can and should do the things you love, but if those things change that's fine. Some of it is about distance. When I was younger and I was organizing shows all the time and I was going on tour a lot and wasn't working full time, I felt like everything I did revolved around this ill-defined, amorphous "scene" that now I don't know what "it" is or ever was, but I still have those ideals.

I still feel that punk and DIY can be really transformative and can link with other struggles. It's an important way to fight and resist and find catharsis against the wrongs of the world, but now I feel like I live in Durham and we do our shows, but it's the same people. When we go on tour with Martha we're playing quite big venues, but with ONSIND it's more like, "which of our mates will turn up?" Our really good friend Trev—and this is a thirties punk thing—missed our last show because he was cycling at the velodrome, and that's cool! Fred Thomas (indie punker and former member of Saturday Looks Good To Me) has this song where he's in Portland and being criticized by some teenage punks for looking like a hipster, and wants to say, "Hey, I've devoted the past twenty years of my life to this loosely defined group of people who 'like Black Flag' or whatever," and I could say, "I've given all these years to punk and what's it given me other than make me feel old and irrelevant?" But that's not what the record's about. The record is just about the passage of time and people you love coming and going.



Daniel: It's about embracing the ephemera.

Nathan: Yeah, that's right.

David: I wanted to talk about what DIY looks like today and how it's changed since you started playing. The way that the underground of music is so corporatized, with Red Bull running studios and smaller bands performing in front of logos for booze or clothing brands—even the smallest scenes are infiltrated. I wonder whether the values I subscribed to when I was younger can still exist today.

Bear with me because this is pretentious, but whenever I talk to people about change in DIY, I always think of the Hubble expansion—how it's been shown that in the distant future the universe will have expanded so much and so fast that the light from distant stars will never reach earth. Anyone born in that future era won't even be able to understand the universe the way we do now, because the evidence of it won't even exist—that they're used to be so much more. That always make me think of Fugazi—who essentially got me into DIY through their ethos. I wonder whether two or three generations into the future, the idea of a totally independent punk band sustaining four people's lives just off the back of touring and hand pressing records will seem utterly alien it'll be impossible to understand.

Nathan: I think what you're describing is Capitalist Realism (U.K. academic Mark Fisher's idea of capitalism as so pervasive that to imagine an alternative becomes impossible). When I got into punk it was the '90s, when "twenty years ago" was the '70s. Now "twenty years ago" was the '90s. Culture becomes a time capsule while ideas about its structural landscape change. There's a record shop in Durham market that sells Crass 7"s that say "pay no more than 40p" and they're eight quid (rough equivalent: forty cents to eight dollars), and of course that's inflation. It happens, but the idea that we can apply the same standards to now is weird. This bums me out, but everything we do is nostalgic musically. If you went back to the eighties and played our music to someone, they'd think it was familiar.

I don't really have an interest in "the new," but the idea of newness has kind of died culturally. The idea of DIY being so commoditized that it's impossible to escape is capitalism. It's easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism, and by the same token it's impossible to imagine sharing music today without the internet, but that's a totally neoliberal thing. People talk about the democratization effect of the internet, but they're not using lefty social media sites. They're using Twitter and Facebook.

Daniel: When we released *Anaesthesiology* four years ago, we didn't have any videos for it, any website to "premiere" it on, we just put it out. Now every band has a video, on a new site. It's total saturation. We were talking about doing some weird stuff for this record, like putting the record in shops around the

U.K. and letting people come in to listen to it a week before release.

Nathan: And we were gonna call it an "offline stream." [laughs] One of the things that me and Andrew (of U.K. DIY label Specialist Subject) talked about was asking Joyce Manor whether we could "premiere" our song on their page, just to fuck with the rules a bit. [laughs]

Daniel: Maybe there's a super anarchist music site, but ultimately people are going to engage with it via Facebook and Zuckerberg will pocket the money.

Nathan: But the other option is, "We will put your artifact into a shop and people will walk in from the street and pay money to buy it." It's like, "are you joking?" I want someone to write a book about it, but it's inescapable and hegemonic. ONSIND has never done anything with Vice for instance, because we'd played Death By Audio in New York—a proper DIY venue that they bought out and replaced with offices. But then we know people who write for Vice who just want to be journalists and that's a way to earn their money. I don't think I should judge them for that. It's impossible to escape the system. What we have to ask is where can we fight back and how to not just be meat for the grinder. Hopefully the record is what will be important and have a life of its own, and everything else is just shite.

Daniel: I've noticed more middle men in punk now. All this stuff leads to booking agents and things like that.

Nathan: That's about what "DIY" is. It's a conversation (Nathan and Daniel's more well known band) Martha has been having because we don't feel we do enough now to be DIY. I booked our last tour and it nearly killed me because everyone's so busy. But if we got someone to book it for us, we couldn't be DIY.

I mean I've got a job, I'm thirty-two, and I just don't care. I still believe in DIY, but where we are as a band it'd be helpful to have some help. We're not going to sign to big agencies that we sometimes get offers from, but we can get too bogged down in the "rules" written by blokes in Washington or in Crass written in a totally different era.

I think punk does need red lines, but we're happy to say we've crossed that and not sully it. For the record, Martha doesn't have a booking agent, manager, or even a fucking label in the U.K., but all that means is that our emails don't get answered. It's like when Martha did a photo shoot with (U.K. mainstream rock magazine) *Kerrang!* and they want to make a big deal out of us being DIY, but we're saying, "Just by covering us for your magazine you've stopped us being DIY."

Daniel: They were saying, "We're just going to tape some black gaffer tape to the wall behind you so it looks like DIY." It was like *Josie and the Pussycats* or something. You think, "Why are we doing this?" but then also it's cool to be in this building with a framed picture of (talk show host) Dermot O'Leary and a (gossip magazine)

Grazia award on the table. I want that in my memories. It felt like trespassing but also destroying our right to ever be called DIY again. But we'd done it without being part of that machine. It's fun.

It's like (old school anarcho punk band) Chumbawamba throwing a bucket of water over (Labour Deputy Prime Minister) John Prescott at the Brit Awards. I'd like to have a hit like them, make a load of money, everyone hate us, and donate all our money to The 1 in 12 (a famous anarchist club in Yorkshire). Just say we've had a good laugh and it's only music.

Nathan: I think the key thing is that we're DIY because we're an anti-capitalist band. It's more about how can you fuck up and resist capitalism. I'm into populist left wing stuff. I can get behind someone like Corbyn (the radically-inclined leader of The Labour Party). If it's going to change things materially for people, I'd sacrifice all my credibility. I don't care about Nathan "the brand." We should be Martha "anti capitalist," not "Martha DIY." That's the important part, not the rules.

David: While you're talking mainstream politics, I saw you play in a festival in Bristol two days after the 2015 election which the Conservatives won. It's since been a massive struggle to have any sense of optimism about the new direction politics was taking because left wing parties had so little support for the last two years, but since the 2017 election (in which the Labour party with Jeremy Corbyn as leader gained seats and removed the ruling Conservative party majorities, utterly confounding expectations and polling) things have been neck and neck. There's a huge sense of optimism in a way I've never known in my life. The ideas I had all but given up on suddenly aren't such a lonely slog anymore.

Nathan: It's like Mark Fisher again—the abandonment of the mainstream as something relevant to the left is a problem. Ideas I've espoused in the past of "fuck parliament, fuck being on TV," I've actually decided it'd be good if some people in parliament weren't psychopathic evil bastards. That's not to say that political activism doesn't matter, or even to say that revolutionary politics aren't important. You can support a variety of tactics, including things like rioting, just as a means to an end. You see it in the media that what counts as "left" is still generally people who support capitalism, and it's like, "well, that isn't left wing." What we have now is a broad-based coalition of popular groups and maybe next year there could be an election and Corbyn could win and things could change.

There's been estimated to be 200,000 austerity-related deaths since 2010, directly attributable to cuts in social care. It's a genocide. These ideological decisions are causing people to die and live miserably. So I'm very stoked, and that's not to say Corbyn is without problems

David: It's almost like you've been converted to electoralism?



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and should do
the things you love,

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Nathan: Well, I still think parliament is a fundamentally corrupt way of organizing, but I'm arguing against the anarchist in my brain that says, "This is bollocks. We'll be betrayed." But then if he funds the NHS (National Health Service) a bit better, that's fully worth me sacrificing my cred. I still fully support direct action and other forms of resistance to austerity. In the past it always felt pointless with New Labour: the war in Iraq, the dismantling of the state and social support. That was coming from Labour, and that's what led me to go off into the deep end. When I was eighteen I was enrolled on a degree course where I'd spend a year shadowing an MP (Member of Parliament), but then I was radicalized by the internet [laughs]. Well, it was isn't even the internet, it was being eighteen, listening to Rage. Also reading *Hegemony or Survival* by Noam Chomsky.

David: The album track "Loyalty Festers" sounds compassionate to someone who might join the (far right racist group) English Defence League and who might be on the opposite side of your ideals. That's also a true story, right?

Nathan: It's literally someone I grew up with and knew from age four, which makes it easier to be compassionate, I suppose. I started to notice that my family life and experiences and the context we grew up in were totally different, and he would come to school with bruises—and one year with a broken arm—and everyone talks and gossips. You hear that his dad's in prison and has "grass" (snitch) written in spray paint on the side of his house. He starts acting fucked up at school, punching girls in the arm, and so you stop hanging out, because of those actions, even if we were really close. Your life goes either way, then you find them years later with the EDL and I think that he'd deserve to be punched, but then that'd be all he's ever had, and that's sad. It's not the same for everyone. Not everyone comes to those politics from those experiences, but it's quite crushing to know that.

Daniel: That doesn't remove the agency, though. Plenty of people grow up in similar circumstances and still make the decision to not become racist activists.

David: Finally, I wanted to talk about mental health and the U.K. DIY scene, given your own experiences and songwriting have been contributing to this for years and years. There's a much wider acknowledgement of, understanding, and compassion toward mental illness in U.K. punk today and that's something I don't remember ever being a thing when I was growing up. There's a song on your new record called "Sectioned" (forcibly hospitalized, under U.K. mental health law), and that's part of a long history you guys have of directly addressing the social reality of mental illness in really straightforward, detailed terms.

Daniel: People sing about mental health and it's good to talk about mental health, but we feel you can't have that discourse without



talking about it in the context of cuts to mental health services.

Nathan: It has to be about saying, "fund the NHS, fund mental health." Millennials with anxiety is one thing, but children with severe eating disorders that are on death's door who can't access mental health services are another. I am a millennial with anxiety and I don't say this to undermine that, but there are people in severe states of suicidal ideation and other things who aren't able to get help.

That song is another true story about a relative of mine who was sectioned when I was young and it was the first time I really thought about things that you assume to be just normal when you watch an adult as a child. For various complex reasons, I ended up helping out at the funeral. It was difficult. It made me think a lot about my own future and where I'm headed, too. There were songs that were there in the past—about a pretence of heartbreak maybe—and they were seen as "emo," but for us it's about explicitly articulating a method like CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) in a song.

This song was about *The Shining*, in a way, like that was the first depiction I'd seen of someone losing their mind and wondering whether this family member who had also been losing their mind was going to hurt me, which of course they weren't. A more nuanced, real, cultural account like that about something that's very normal is great. It reduces stigma and can have positive effects, but, ultimately—if we only ever get people who already have support networks together to sing about—it becomes something that could still be a net positive, but the priority needs to be the people who can't get the help. I mean people are going to write about what they're going to write about, and they

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HOW TO NOT JUST
BE MEAT FOR THE
GRINDER.

should really write about personal trauma and things, but we shouldn't pretend it's activism, and that song isn't activism.

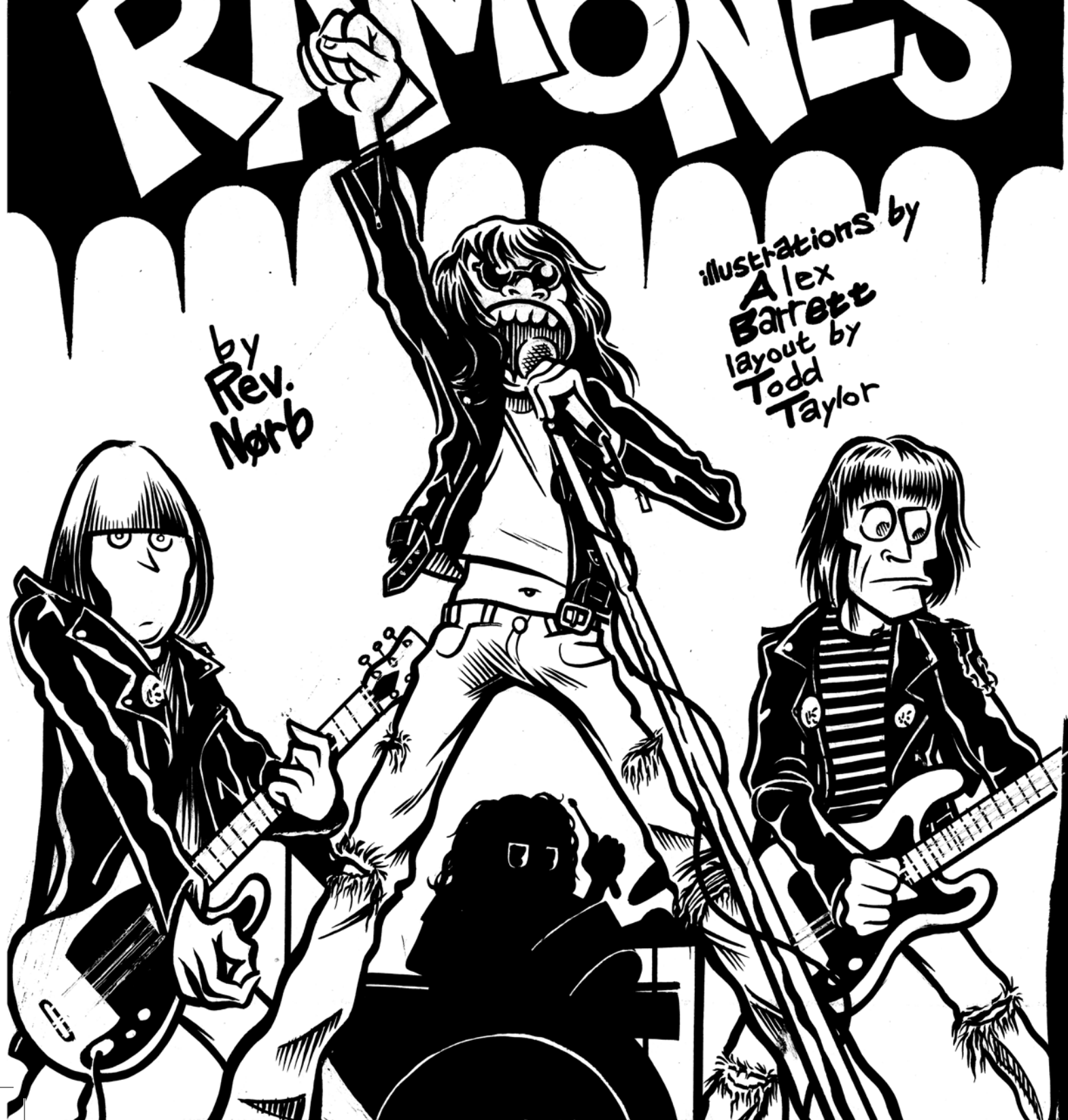
Daniel: Getting together and singing songs for catharsis does have its place.

Nathan: And that's been a big help for me, too. But unless you have the structural analysis, you're essentially saying, "Rich people: get help," "Poor people: uh-oh."

Pinhead Einsteins: ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO THE RAMONES

by
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AGE 12: THE KIDS ARE LOSING THEIR MINDS

PUNK ROCK WAS A PUZZLING THING to a twelve-year-old stuck in the Upper Midwest in 1977. The mainstream news media loved to report on its presumed excesses, while the college newspaper record reviewers reveled in it. But there was nowhere one could actually, y'know, *hear* it. The only snippets of punk rock anyone I knew had ever heard were incidental bits of live music in the background of news show footage. The verdict on the playground, gleaned from these brief exposures was that punk rock was "just a bunch of noise." I was curious: *What does "noise" sound like, exactly?* No one could describe this "noise" with any manner of clarity; the best description I could come away with was that punk rock was a bunch of people who couldn't play their instruments making noise and screaming. It sounded stupid, I guessed.

A mix of curiosity, shock, and alarm hit the back seat of the family's Buick LeSabre when the DJ on WKAU-AM announced they'd be "right back with the new one from the Ramones!" *To what manner of degenerate hell were these people intending on exposing us? Weren't the Bee Gees and Barry Manilow torture enough?* The commercials subsided, Tommy Ramone hit the snare drum thrice, and I was suddenly, unexpectedly, brained with the greatest thing I'd ever heard in my life, "Do You Wanna Dance?" by the Ramones. Three chords, full blast, over and over and over again, dropping down to this low chord between choruses and verses, just to let you know it was all gonna come back and bash you in the face again in a couple seconds for the whole manic roller coaster ride to start over again. The Ramones landed right in my nervous system, as if beamed directly into my reptilian forebrain. I had, for reasons no longer clear to me, been looking at my watch during the song, timing it. At the song's conclusion, I yelled "*That song was under two minutes long!*" to no one in particular, in utter amazement. *A minute-fifty-something!* That was completely unheard of. Was that possible? *Was it even legal?* Ordered, precise, repetitious, and powerful, the Ramones were the absolute LEAST noise-like sound I'd heard in my life, a candy-coated nuclear detonation that melded the sweet bubblegum music of my pre-school years with my newly minted adolescent drives to rampage, fuck, and destroy. It was a fairly eventful 1:52.

Confused that I could not find "Do You Wanna Dance?" in the 45 sections of the local supermarket or department stores—and doubly confused this song was not being played twice an hour on every station on my radio—the Ramones became an elusive unicorn that I could have sworn I'd once spotted. *I heard them on the radio. I know they exist. Where are they?*

It was like, for one glorious minute and fifty-two glorious seconds, the clouds parted and the pure, unfiltered genius of the Ramones beamed thru, a shot of pure adrenaline to the failing grey heart of our collective existence—then the clouds slammed shut and it was back to "Boogie Oogie Oogie" and "I Write the Songs" for the duration.

One summer's day finally flush with babysitting cash, I took my bike downtown, summoned up my nerve, and gamely tiptoed into the local head shop. Apart from a love of rock'n'roll, I was about as nerdy as it gets and had no interest whatsoever in bongos, clips, or rolling materials—but they had *records* in there, thus in I went. After a bit of nervous shopping, I made my selection: In my hands I clutched a shiny new copy of Ted Nugent's *Cat Scratch Fever* album. I wasn't that nuts about Ted, but the title track was kind of all right, and I really felt like buying a new album that day, so the Nuge it would be. As I headed towards the counter, some buried prehensile memory suggested I first check to see if the Ramones had any albums there.

And there it was, in all its black, white, and hot pink glory: *Rocket to Russia*, the album with "Do You Wanna Dance?" on it. In a grainy black-and-white cover photo, the band leaned against a brick wall in leather jackets, ripped jeans, and T-shirts. Sold.

If "Do You Wanna Dance?" blew my mind, *Rocket to Russia*—the Ramones' third album—completely re-wired it. First off, it had *fourteen songs*. This was unheard of, practically unthinkable. Albums in the 1970s had ten songs, tops. Sometimes nine or eight. And

songs were supposed to be around four minutes in length, but the longest song *here* was 2:49! High-contrast, grainy black-and-white photographs in the decade of airbrushes and custom vans, fourteen-song albums when the norm was under ten, two-minute songs when everyone else was playing four-minute songs—the album was *confrontationally wrecking seemingly immutable social expectations while it was still in the shrink wrap*. Popping the shrink wrap led to even more confounded expectations: The album sleeve was full of hilarious, tongue-in-cheek cartoons—hopping cretins, surfing birds, and clandestine brain surgeries—serving to complement the minimal, often ridiculous lyrics (by my probably-not-quite-accurate-but-likely-close-enough count, *Rocket to Russia's* lyrics comprise 334 unique words. For purposes of comparison, *The Cat in the Hat* uses 225). The complete and utter discombobulation reached its glorious apex when I actually got the record on the turntable: To my amazement, *every single song* sounded like a variant on "Do You Wanna Dance?"—jackhammer guitars, masterfully precise drums, and minimalistic, catchy lyrics about beaches, punk rockers, and lobotomies. There wasn't even a second of silence between the end of the first song and the beginning of the second; some guy yelled "1-2-3-4!" and the band immediately careened back into action at the same whiplash pace. The experience of listening to a Ramones album for the first time was not unlike licking the tops of fourteen 9-volt batteries, one after the other. It was musical shock therapy, and I would never be the same.

1966-'74: FORMING (IN A STRAIGHT LINE)

IT WOULD BE PHILOSOPHICALLY CONVENIENT to imagine the Ramones springing forth one day in 1976, wholly formed, like Athena from Zeus's noggin. The Ramones' roots, however, can actually be traced as far back as 1966 when teenaged guitarist Tommy Erdelyi (née Tamás Erdélyi; 1/2/1949—7/11/2014) and similarly teenaged bass player John Cummings (10/8/1948—9/15/2004) played together in a teen beat combo known as the Tangerine Puppets based out of the Forest Hills neighborhood of Queens (a neighborhood which, since 1962, they'd shared with that wall-crawling menace, Spider-Man). Tommy was a devoted musician who came to the U.S. from Budapest, Hungary, at age four; Johnny was a baseball-loving delinquent who'd been the scourge of multiple military schools. As legend has it, the Tangerine Puppets cut their own strings after a gig opening for the Knickerbockers ("Lies"), when Johnny decided his level of musicianship was too woefully primitive to compete with the headliners, and gave up playing music for good... or so he imagined.

Tommy soldiered on in various combos and eventually landed work as a recording engineer at The Record Plant, where he worked on a number of high-profile projects which included Jimi Hendrix's *Band of Gypsies* album. As the '60s turned to the '70s and the '70s oozed forward, Tommy took note of the ascension of the New York Dolls in the city's closely knit music scene, and was gifted a revelation of the following tenor: *Virtuosity is not only unnecessary to create excitement, it might actually work against it*. After Tommy and future Ramones tour manager Monte Melnick had designed and built a recording/rehearsal studio, Performance Studios, on Manhattan's East 20th Street, Tommy began casting about for a band he could mold into a stripped-down, exciting unit *à la* the Dolls.

He called his high school pal John repeatedly in hopes of persuading him into playing music again. Despite talking about forming a band for two years running with a guy whom he knew from his construction job, John had no legit interest in ever joining another band—until he was laid off, at which point in time he thought, *fuck it*, and bought a fifty dollar Mosrite guitar. John's friend from work, Doug Colvin (9/18/1951—6/5/2002) was raised on an Army base in Germany, lived in the neighborhood, owned a guitar, and had taken to calling himself "Dee Dee Ramone," after "Paul Ramon," an alias occasionally utilized by Paul McCartney. Another neighbor, Richie (not the drummer), was enlisted on bass, and the four-piece was rounded out with Jeff Hyman (5/19/1951—4/15/2001) on drums. Hyman was a 6'6" space case who, as "Jeff Starship," sang with local glam heroes Sniper. When Hyman's drumming proved too erratic, Richie bailed on bass, and Dee Dee found himself unable to play and sing simultaneously, Hyman moved to vocals, Dee Dee switched to

RAMONES COST 0.64% OF FLEETWOOD MAC'S TUSK TO RECORD. THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL A PARADIGM SHIFT.

bass, and a parade of drummers were auditioned. After the Rototom-and-gong crowd had unsuccessfully traipsed in and out of Performance Studios, band mastermind Tommy—a lifelong guitarist who'd never played drums in his life—gave it a shot himself. Something clicked. Jeff Starship and John Cummings and Tommy Erdelyi and Dee Dee Ramone became Joey Ramone and Johnny Ramone and Tommy Ramone and Dee Dee Ramone. The Ramones were born. GAME ON, MOTHERFUCKER.

1974-'76: ALL REVVED UP AND READY TO GO

ON WHAT MUST CERTAINLY BE the second-most notable August 16 in Rock History (behind only 8/16/1977, which heralded Elvis's shuffling off from this mortal coil), 8/16/1974 saw the band's debut performance (not counting one poorly received outing as a pre-Tommy three-piece) at CBGB, a Bowery biker dive that had recently begun booking original rock acts, despite its name being an acronym for "Country, Bluegrass, Blues." As Billy Altman's liner notes to the *Ramones Mania* album has it, the band "played to a total of five warm bodies—six if you count the owner's dog." By all accounts, the most notable thing about vintage '74 Ramones was their inability to finish a two-minute song without having to stop in the middle to yell at one another, but, by 1975, the key components of The-Ramones-As-We-Know-Them were in place: The ripped jeans, the leather jackets, the machine-gun delivery, the Moe Howard-like tonsorial affectations. The script flipped on CBGB's fortunes in mid-'75, when owner Hilly Kristal held a week-long "Summer of Rock" festival of unsigned bands, drawing attention from highbrow sources like *Rolling Stone* as well as legions of street-level pinheads. As a result, the Ramones started packin' 'em in at CBGB, and, after joining up with manager Danny Fields—the guy who got the Stooges and MC5 signed to Elektra—landed a deal with Seymour Stein's Sire Records. Sire—whose purchase by corporate behemoth Warner Brothers was still years away—was an independent label from New York with a scattering of hits under their belt, and marched the band into Radio City Music Hall's Plaza Sound studios in early '76.

Much ado has been made about how the first Ramones album only cost a meager \$6,400 to record, and said ado is not entirely unwarranted. We *are*, after all, talking about an era when Fleetwood Mac spent well over a MILLION dollars to record an album. Breaking down the math, that means *Ramones* cost *sixty-four-hundredths-of-one-percent*—0.64%—of Fleetwood Mac's *Tusk* to record. Put another way, you could record over 156 Ramones albums for the price of one Fleetwood Mac album. PUNK! So let's flip that figure: When's the last time *your* band spent \$6,400 on recording an album? Have you ever spent half that much? A third? Most of us wouldn't even know what the hell to do with a \$6,400 recording budget. Adjust those 1976 dollars for inflation, and that sixty-four hundred swells to over \$28,000. Spending \$6,400 on recording a punk album is a bit of a stretch for most of us; spending \$28k and change is utterly inconceivable. That's what they call a *paradigm shift*. Before the Ramones, people were agog anyone could spend so little to record an album. After the Ramones, we're agog they spent so much (granted, I am conveniently ignoring the additional paradigm shift of digital recording technology, but you presumably catch the drift). Be this as it may, the band was in and out of the studio in a week, and *Ramones* crashed into an unsuspecting planet on April 23, 1976.

Twenty-nine minutes long and adorned with one of the most iconic cover photos known to man, *Ramones* remains—more so than any other record before or since—the sonic blueprint of punk rock music. Featuring a uniquely odd production whereby the guitar was pushed completely into the left channel and the bass completely to the right, the album's fourteen songs were engineered and mixed essentially identically to one another—instead of building each song's sonic landscape from scratch, all fourteen songs got more or less identical treatment. The first song sounds more or less like the last song, which sounds more or less like all the songs in between. This sonic uniformity—for better or for worse—remains a hallmark of punk recording techniques to this day: You get a sound you like, you set the levels, and you go with it. Punk's musical DNA was written by, and permanently encoded in, these fourteen mutant chromosome pairs, and no single song has encoded and writ more punk DNA than the album's lead-off track, "Blitzkrieg Bop." "Blitzkrieg Bop" utilizes four chords and forty-eight words, all but eight of which are monosyllabic ("pulsating" being the statistical outlier at an ungainly three syllables). The more one stares at "Blitzkrieg Bop," the more its perfection crystallizes, in ways one imagines the song's creators could not possibly have been conscious of at the time of its creation: *Did they know that there is never more than one polysyllabic word per line? Did they know that the running time of 2:12 was also the New York area code?* "Blitzkrieg Bop" is the closest to the Platonic ideal of a punk song as an actual punk song can get, essentially defining the craft, the parameters, and the form of the archetype—all in 132 seconds. Its origins are stunningly more banal than all that Plato gibberish I just spouted: "Blitzkrieg Bop" and its beloved "HEY! HO! LET'S GO!" chant were more or less just main author Tommy's attempt to come up with something similar to the song "Saturday Night" by the Bay City Rollers (a then-popular Scottish boy band), and its million-selling chant of "S! A! T-U-R! D-A-Y! NIGHT!" In some weird way, then, punk rock owes great portions of its existence to the frickin' *Bay City Rollers*—not even the Rollers themselves, but an attempt to rip off the Bay City Rollers. Sheesh. Well, any port in a storm, I guess.

Prior to the release of *Ramones*, the band's antics were largely confined to the New York area, with a few jaunts to New England tossed in for levity (nothing like a punk band opening up for blues-rockers Johnny Winter in Connecticut to make one appreciate the humble charms of home). Following the album's release, the band began casting their nets across the length and breadth of the nation and globe. On July 4, 1976—the exact date of the American Bicentennial, which is another one of those things that makes you wonder what kind of mad, celestial genius manipulates these events to such perfection—the Ramones played their first show in London, wowing a rabidly pogoing crowd at the Roundhouse. In what can arguably be deemed the most significant show in the history of punk, current and future members of the Pistols, Clash, Damned, Generation X, and Pretenders are front and center. The fuses are lit. Punk Rock is a GO. *Destruction imminent!*

To no one's surprise but their own, "Blitzkrieg Bop" failed to dislodge the Bay City Rollers, et al., from the hearts and minds of the American record-buying public, missing the charts entirely. The comparatively laid-back follow-up single, "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend," met with an identical fate, while the album stalled at a peak chart position of #111. The love-it-or-hate-it initial salvo of *Ramones* had, however, garnered an outsized amount of press attention,

and, in November 1976, the band returned to the studio to record a follow-up. Entitled *Leave Home*, the album's recording budget was bankrolled to the lordly tune of \$10,000—a full *one percent* of the *Tusk* budget! Produced in the main by Tommy (aided and abetted by Tony Bongiovi, whose cousin, Jon, would wind up doing quite well for himself in the '80s wuss-rock scene), *Leave Home* builds on the norm-trashing primitivism of *Ramones*, codifying the guitar/bass attack into a bombastic, unstoppable gnawing that made it sound like one's stereo was being eaten alive by barn-sized rodents. While not as primitive as the debut, *Leave Home* equals—and likely surpasses—the original in terms of sheer sonic ferocity. In addition to the pummeling, the album's songs also exhibit a tunefulness that had been a bit more on-again/off-again on the first album. With no hit record to funnel royalties back into the pockets of their ragged Levi's, the band had spent two years honing and routinely unleashing their live act as a matter of financial self-preservation more than anything else; where *Ramones* was the sound of wild-eyed defiance, naïve energy, and wishful thinking, *Leave Home* is the sound of a well-oiled juggernaut hitting an early peak.

1977: THE SUN IS OUT AND I WANT SOME

LEAVE HOME PRESERVED the original album's lyrical themes of violence, alienation, drugs, and girls, and doubled down on what would become a critical component of Ramonesiana: Mental illness. The lyrics to "Gimme Gimme Shock Treatment"—lovingly scrawled in Dee Dee's third-grader penmanship—hang in a glass case in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, whilst "Pinhead"'s "gabba gabba, we accept you, we accept you, one of us"—adapted from a freak show initiation chant in Tod Browning's creepy 1932 movie *Freaks*—became the *de facto* oath of office for the Ramones' swelling legions of fans. Dee Dee was a bipolar drug addict, and Joey had been diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic, spending a month in the mental ward of St. Vincent's Hospital. They knew of what they spoke.

On the "girls" side of the spectrum, it would be hard to overstate the importance of "Oh Oh I Love Her So" on the cognitive development of huge swaths of '90s pop punk. The main contributing factor to this sustained influence is one simple thing: *They mentioned Burger King*. Forty years later, a line like "I met her at the Burger King / Fell in love by the soda machine" may seem wholly unremarkable to Casual Fan and Rock Scholar alike, but, like much of the ground-breakingness associated with the Ramones, this has to be viewed in the context of its era for full appreciation. Rock bands simply did not mention fast food restaurants in the lyrics of their songs in the 1970s (or, for that matter, the '60s or '50s). Once in a while there might be a fast food reference played for laughs—e.g., Larry Groce's 1976 top ten novelty song "Junk Food Junkie"—but, as far as some normal, everyday place like Burger King being mentioned in a more-or-less serious rock lyrical context? *Forget it*. KISS didn't talk about banging groupies at Hardee's, Aerosmith didn't sing about going to Walgreens. The Dictators did have a line about "eating at McDonald's for lunch," but they were a much more tongue-in-cheek outfit than the Ramones, and it was harder to discern where the band ended and the parody started.

Burger King was a real place, in real life, where people really went, mentioned *by name*, in a *real* song. Just as the Ramones' limited musical abilities and bare bones recording budgets democratized the qualifications for being in a band and the process of making records, so too did "Oh Oh I Love Her So" democratize the range of personal experiences that could be considered songworthy. Not everybody had a 53rd & 3rd, but everybody had a Burger King. Before "Oh Oh I Love Her So," Little Richard sung about shagging on down by a generic "union hall," whilst the Shangri-Las met the Leader of the Pack at, simply, "the candy store." After "Oh Oh I Love Her So," we had the Undertones singing about "raiding the Spar" (some kinda British convenience store/gas station) for a Mars Bar, Boris The Sprinkler singing "I Don't Really Wanna Walk to Taco Bell Without You," the Queers singing about their "Burger King Queen," and trillions of other examples of specifically named banal venues of everyday life, hoisted to positions of respect (or at least not overt disrespect) that had



NAÏVE BOY-GIRL SENTIMENT + MENTAL ILLNESS PLAYED FOR LAUGHS + CARTOON VIOLENCE + BURGER KING = RAMONES.

heretofore been reserved for, say, the lights of Paris or something. It was local color made global, or at least national. The classic formula for the band's topical gestalt was thus established: naïve boy-girl sentiment + mental illness played for laughs + cartoon violence + Burger King = Ramones. Although the "Swallow My Pride" 45 did graze the lower reaches of the U.K. Top 40, neither it nor the cloyingly simplistic "I Remember You" made the U.S. charts. The album, released in January 1977, stalled at #148. Go figure.

In 1977, punk exploded. In between their 144 tour dates for the year, the band released a non-LP 45 that actually managed to dent the American Hot 100 singles chart: "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker" clambered to #81 that summer, also racking up a #22 placement in the U.K. and breaking the Top 20 in Sweden. One of the Ramones' most iconic and enduring numbers, the song delicately crowbarred its way into the fringes of mainstream radio not only on the strength of its deft melding of punk and bubblegum tropes, but also by virtue of canny adjustments to the band's sound to increase radio-friendliness: An acoustic guitar is buried in the mix of "Sheena," apparently blunting the band's edge just enough for radio.

Encouraged, the band returned to the studio in August with a recording budget in the \$25,000-\$30,000 range to record *Rocket to Russia*, the album that would change my life. More so than any other Ramones record, *Rocket to Russia*—the Ramones' last truly great album—is an almost perfect blend of the band's steamrolling energy with catchy, accessible pop elements. The moves seem to pay off, at least relative to previous efforts: Released in November 1977, *Rocket to Russia* peaked at #49 on the U.S. album chart, and both singles from the album (three if you count "Sheena") also charted: "Rockaway Beach" became the band's all-time highest-charting song in the U.S. when it hit #66, and "Do You Wanna Dance?" squeaked in at #86. The Ramones would continue to tour and record for almost nineteen more years. They would never have another single in the Hot 100.

1978: BEGINNING TO FEEL THE STRAIN

A BOMB DROPPED IN 1978: Tommy, burned out from constant touring, wanted out. In addition to the physical wear-and-tear inflicted on the band's original mastermind by the rigors of the road, the Ramones, despite the carefully honed image of unity they presented to the public, were a bunch of fuckheads to be around. Tommy no longer felt inclined to be subjected to further verbal and mental abuse at their hands. This departure opened a fissure in the band's operating firmament that was never truly repaired: While Johnny had the keenest sense of what the Ramones *were*, Tommy was the vision holder as to what the Ramones *should be*. Tommy—who'd had a hand in producing all three of the band's albums to that point—agreed to stay on in a studio role, but, despite Johnny's entreaties to the contrary, abdicated his drum position in May 1978, replaced by Marc Bell dba Marky Ramone (b. 7/15/1952) (not dead) (yet), wooed away from his gig with Richard Hell and the Voidoids by the Ramones' superior cash flow. This changing of the guard began to undermine the band dynamic: Johnny was the businessman and the authoritarian, Joey was the front man who craved pop stardom, and Dee Dee was... well... Dee Dee. As Marky was a hired gun and thus essentially nobody, Johnny—the closest to Tommy in terms of respecting and maintaining the band's original vision—could now be thwarted by a coalition of Dee Dee (with whom he did not always get along) and Joey (with

whom he *never* got along). Almost imperceptibly at first, things began to slowly slide in an ominous direction.

Wrongly hailed as a classic, the band's fourth album, *Road to Ruin*, began to illustrate what was possible—for good or ill—in a post-Tommy context. On the bright side, half of the album's tracks are stone cold classics: Rarely does punk rock get better than "I'm Against It," "I Wanna Be Sedated," "Go Mental" or "Bad Brain." Further, *Punk* cartoonist John Holmstrom, whose lowbrow brilliance had been relegated to *Rocket to Russia*'s back cover and lyric sheet, got the entirety of *Road to Ruin*'s front cover on which to ply his trade. No longer was a one-size-fits-all approach taken with all the album's tracks; the songs all exhibited some degree of acoustic differentiation (or as close as the Ramones come to such a thing). It would be hard, if not impossible, to imagine a gem like "I Wanna Be Sedated" stemming from the early albums. On the flip side, this approach yielded numerous duds as well: "Don't Come Close," the album's first single, was slathered with inexplicable country and western flavorings, while "I Wanted Everything"—the Ramones' first song to break the three-minute mark—meandered on pointlessly. The Dee Dee ballad "Questioningly" manages to be country and westernish *and* over three minutes long, but I like that one, so let's move on.

What really struck me as a shocking betrayal of core principles—at the tender age of fourteen—was the number of tracks the album contained: Twelve. All previous Ramones albums had fourteen songs, seven per side. It seemed in violation of natural universal law that any given Ramones album could deviate from that figure. *It's Alive*—a double-live album recorded with Tommy at the tail end of 1977 but released in 1979—followed the formula with twenty-eight songs, seven per side. Why couldn't *Road to Ruin* be almost as hurtful to my teenage psyche as the complete and utter absence of songs under two minutes in length, rendered even more distasteful by the presence of songs over *three* minutes in length. Did they imagine that the only barrier to widespread airplay and public acclaim was really just a shortage of song length? *Road to Ruin* was an admittedly intentional attempt to make a commercially successful record. What might have happened had the record company brain trust released the brilliant "I Wanna Be Sedated"—arguably the most commercial song the Ramones would ever emit—as a single in the U.S., as opposed to a pointless country and western flirtation, and then a remake of "Needles and Pins" (#13 for the Searchers in 1964), should be a matter of rampant speculation. As it stands, none of the singles charted, and the album tanked at #103. Karma.

1979-'80: IT'S THE END, THE END OF THE SEVENTIES

THE BAND'S REALIZATION that the Ramones weren't gonna be the next Bay City Rollers began to sink in right around the time the Sex Pistols U.S. tour captivated the attention of journalists from coast to coast. American rock writers certainly found the Ramones grist for lively discourse, but Yankee mainstream journalists sure as hell didn't see a story in a mere rock'n'roll band, even if that band wore matching leather jackets on stage. The Ramones found themselves foisted on both ends of punk's unforgiving petard: Their mere association with the "punk" label was a solid non-starter on commercial radio; their lack of vomit, spikes and spit cost them the attention of the mainstream media. In 1979, the band managed to

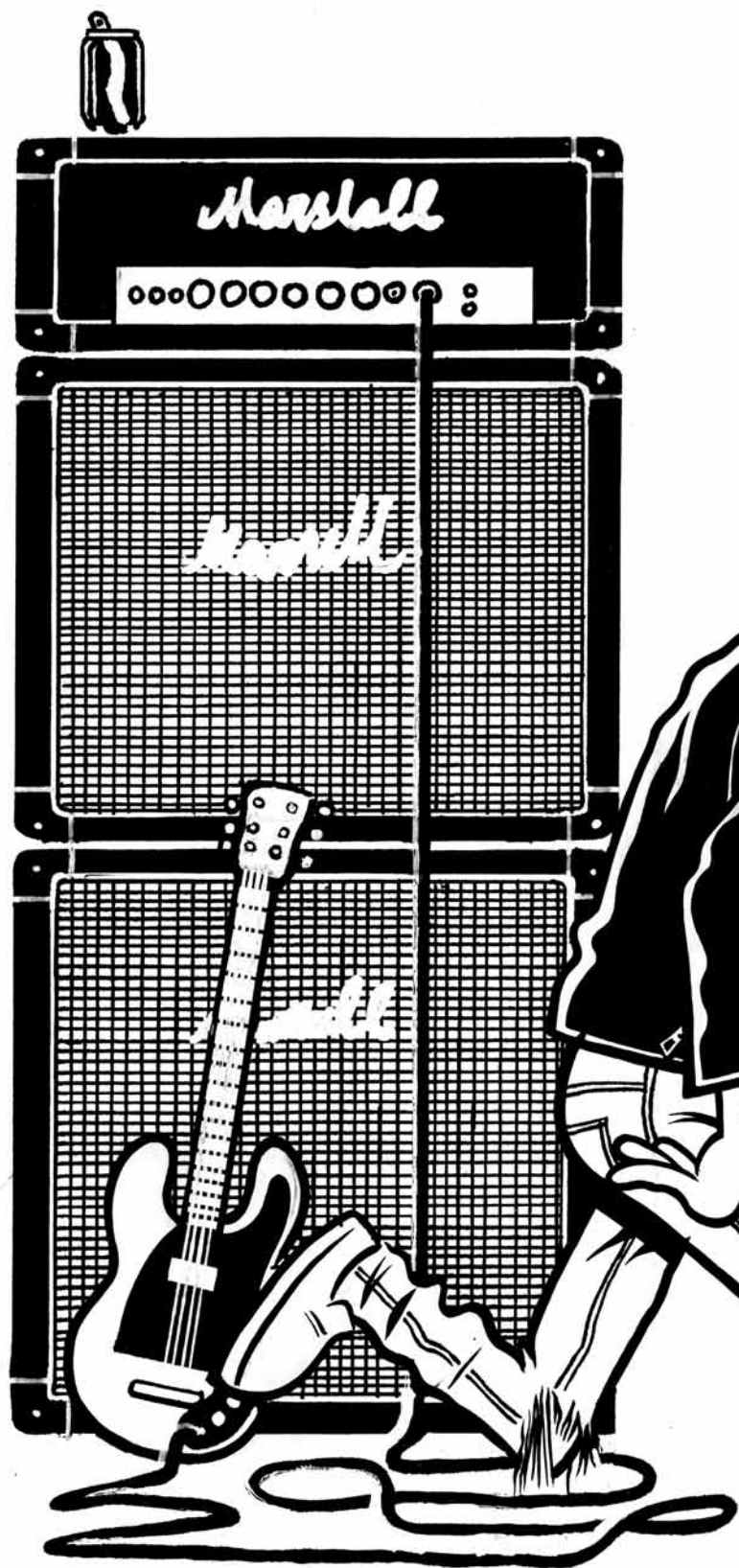
land roles (as themselves) as the central figures of Roger Corman's low-budget *Rock 'n' Roll High School* film (the band plays five songs live, and lip-syncs to three others). The movie was produced on a \$200,000 budget, \$5,000 of which—total—went to the Ramones. A Hollywood star-maker it was not. Desperate now to mine some of that West Coast star-making magic, the band turned to the most unlikely of producers to helm their next record: '60s icon/relic/nutjob Phil Spector.

The reclusive Spector was one of the more celebrated hitmakers of the 1960s—the ears responsible for chart-toppers like “To Know Him Is to Love Him,” “Da Doo Ron Ron,” “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling,” and countless others. Spector’s acoustic calling card was the “Wall of Sound”—a densely-packed sonic porridge of reverb and excessive instrumentation. He was also a complete wack-job, which might explain the nineteen-year prison term he’s currently serving for second-degree murder. A decade removed from his prime, Spector thought he could make a super-duper-star out of Joey; Joey, of course, wanted nothing more than to *be* a super-duper-star, so the Ramones hunkered down in Spector’s legendary Gold Star Studios in East Hollywood to record what would be their fifth album, *End of the Century*.

Spector, always flanked by two bodyguards, wore a cape, a wig, and two handguns—one of which was brandished in Dee Dee’s general direction at least once. He drank constantly, spent hours watching horror movies, and made Johnny, to his great anguish, play the opening chord to “Rock ‘n’ Roll High School” for hours on end—eccentricities not at all conducive to the band’s previously established get-in-get-out studio methodology. The album cost \$200,000 to make—thirty-one times the cost of *Ramones*; a fifth of a *Tusk*. The recordings are rife with Phil’s “Wrecking Crew” session men—the only Ramone present on the remake of the Ronettes’ “Baby I Love You” is Joey. The album as a whole seems like a pitched battle between competing walls of sound: Sometimes the Ramones win, sometimes the band is swallowed up by the avalanche of Spector-Muck, and, in spots like “Do You Remember Rock ‘n’ Roll Radio?,” the warring parties produce a mutually beneficial symbiosis that’s actually kinda cool.

For the first time, the album cover portrays the band devoid of their trademark leather jackets: Johnny votes pro-jacket; Joey and Dee Dee, hoping to nerf their image just enough to lead them to the promised land, vote against. Marky has no vote. Phil Spector’s name appears twice on the back cover, which is twice more than any of the band members’ names. In the end, it hardly matters: Although the string-laden (!) “Baby I Love You” does break the U.K. top ten, none of the album’s singles sniff the charts in America. The \$200,000 album does give the band their highest ever chart placement at #44—all of five spots higher than *Rocket to Russia*. For what it’s worth, my old band recorded a tribute version of the *End of the Century* album for \$450, and it sounded pretty decent, so I’m not sure what they used the other \$199,550 for.

Though *End of the Century* can’t quite be branded a complete fiscal and/or aesthetic failure, it certainly didn’t yield the mainstream breakthrough for which the band had hoped. \$200,000 albums with saxophones and string sections but no leather jackets were emblematic of the emerging imbalance in post-Tommy band chemistry, and said chemistry was about to get even worse. Joey had fallen hopelessly, head-over-heels in love with a girl named Linda; as the cold, cruel angel of fate would have it, Linda fell in love with Johnny, eventually marrying him. For all practical purposes, Johnny and Joey would never speak again. The implications of this rift on band chemistry are obvious, but the Ramones were true professionals, able to live on the road together for another fifteen years. The implications on songwriting are a bit more roundabout: Johnny’s contributions to the songwriting were entirely musical—he wrote on his guitar, exclusively playing downstroked chords *à la* the introduction to Led Zeppelin’s “Communication Breakdown,” and passed them off to someone else to add lyrics. With Joey out of the picture and Marky a non-factor, when Johnny and Dee Dee weren’t speaking to each other—a not-uncommon occurrence, given Johnny’s authoritarian tendencies and Dee Dee’s general lunacy—Johnny would find himself completely frozen out of the songwriting process.



THE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE-**RAMONES.** AS-WE-KNOW-**THEM: THE RIPPED JEANS, THE LEATHER JACKETS, THE MACHINE-GUN DELIVERY, THE MOE HOWARD-LIKE TONSORIAL AFFECTATIONS.**

1981-'83: YOU'RE THE ONE THEY NEVER PICK

SO IT WAS with 1981's *Pleasant Dreams*: Joey wrote the pop songs, Dee Dee wrote the punk songs, and Johnny wrote nothing. Prior to *Pleasant Dreams*, song authorship was attributed collectively to the Ramones, as befit their unified identity. With the Happy Family increasingly fracturing, songwriting credits were now attributed to the individual writers—salt in Johnny's wounds, if nothing else. A change in management from Danny Fields to Gary Kurfirst did little to reverse the band's trajectory: Joey—and to a lesser extent, Dee Dee—still wanted to chase the elusive breakthrough hit that never came. Johnny figured—not incorrectly—that if it didn't happen with Phil Spector, it wasn't gonna happen; the Ramones were fated to make their living touring the world in a fifteen-passenger van and their wisest course of action was to abandon all hope of mainstream success and play to their base.

Graham Gouldman was enlisted to produce the new album; like Phil Spector, he was '60s pop royalty, having penned hits for period notables such as the Yardbirds, Hollies, and Herman's Hermits. Unfortunately, Gouldman was probably best known for his membership in 10cc—British soft rockers who produced mellow fluff of the exact stripe the Ramones were bred to exterminate. To his credit, he didn't attempt to leave his fingerprints all over their sound, but telling Johnny he needed to turn his amp down was likely not a harbinger of wild-eyed excellence. Unsurprisingly, the album wound up skewed a bit towards Joey's pop sensibilities, but the record as a whole is solid and contains a few first-ballot classics, "The KKK Took My Baby Away" being chief among them. Still, it was hard not to notice that the album started almost identically to the last album: "We Want the Airwaves," like "Rock 'n' Roll Radio," was basically Joey whining over the decrepit state of radio and insinuating that the Ramones were the only key to Earth's salvation, delivered in a bland enough fashion to demonstrate the band's acute willingness to be part of the problem. Joey revisited the "Oh Oh I Love Her So" theorem with "7-11," this time recasting it as a morbid teen death ballad *a la* "Last Kiss." Given the unpredictability of public demand for any given morbid teen death ballad, one can't help but wonder: If it was "7-11" instead of "Baby I Love You" that Phil Spector went full-out-string-section crazy on, *could that have been the one?* The album—which did away with a front-cover band photo entirely, as well as the band's traditional Franklin Gothic Heavy "RAMONES" wordmark—peaked at a respectable #58, but the singles failed to chart anywhere on the planet. Lather, rinse, repeat.

As if Johnny and Joey's cold war and Dee Dee's drug addiction weren't impediment enough to the band's grind-it-out-on-the-road existence, Marky's alcoholism was laddling sand into the band's gears at an increasingly worrisome pace. The last straw came when Dee Dee (of all people) ratted Marky out for having a bottle of vodka stashed in a studio wastebasket during the recording of the band's seventh studio album, *Subterranean Jungle*. Marky was on thin ice with the band already—the album's subway train cover photo depicts Marky peering from a distant window while the rest of the band congeals in a doorway, a visual statement both symbolic and conducive to easy alteration. Boozing it up in the studio proved to be the final nail in Marky's coffin; he was sacked during recording. The drum tracks were finished by Billy Rogers—a bandmate of ex-Heartbreaker Walter Lure, who'd been enlisted to dose the LP with a smattering of lead guitar.

RAZORCAKE 70

The album's glossy hard rock/bubblegum sound was courtesy of producers Glen Kolotkin and Ritchie Cordell, who'd struck gold with Joan Jett's "I Love Rock 'n' Roll" and were keen to repeat their success (Cordell also had the requisite '60s connections, having written and produced for bubblegum superstars Tommy James & The Shondells). Although Johnny had gotten his hands back on the wheel a bit, co-writing a straight-up old-school Ramones classic, "Psycho Therapy," with Dee Dee, the band's songwriting was beginning to atrophy. *Subterranean Jungle* starts with a cover of "Little Bit O' Soul," a #1 hit in 1967 for the Music Explosion, then follows *that* with a cover of "I Need Your Love" by the Boyfriends (a NYC power pop act best known for a great 45 on Bomp!). The album is three songs deep before an actual Ramones composition even surfaces, with a rendition of the Chambers Brothers' "Time Has Come Today" (#11, 1968) added on side two, the band's first song to top the four-minute mark.

In a sure sign of the aesthetic pendulum swinging back from the Joey-centric excesses of the previous two albums, Joey only authors three of the record's dozen songs, and, for the first time on record, Dee Dee sings lead vocals on a song in its entirety ("Time Bomb"). In a display of what one must assume is late-blooming adolescent defiance, Joey rebrands himself as the eminently dignified "Joe Ramone," which lasts about two seconds. In further evidence of Johnny's waxing influence, the punkiest song on the album, "Psycho Therapy," is released as the album's first single. The video—featuring a simulated lobotomy and gruesome cranial parasite—becomes one of the first to be banned from MTV. *Subterranean Jungle* remains fairly divisive among Ramones fans—the gloss and prominent '80s snare don't sit well with some, others revel in the upbeat crunchiness of it all. Either way, the album charts its release year: #83.

1984-'87: THINGS WERE LOOKING GRIM, BUT THEY'RE LOOKING GOOD AGAIN

MARKY'S SUCCESSOR was Richard Reinhardt (b. 8/11/1957, not dead), dba Richie Beau, eventually known as Richie Ramone. His presence heralded a revitalization of the band's spirit, if not their general fortunes. Marky had always attempted to drum the same way he imagined Tommy would (to the point of initially using Tommy's oversized Rogers kit); this was an admirable philosophy, but flawed in the sense that Tommy's drumming style was so specific and minimal that any unavoidable deviation from Tommy-ism, no matter how slight, was amplified a thousandfold, a rock'n'roll pea disturbing the slumber of the princess from deep beneath a stack of filthy mattresses. Richie just drummed like, you know, a *drummer*. The band suddenly had a flow to them that they'd been lacking throughout Marky's stint. The cretins were, once again, hoppin'.

By 1984, the brunt of the original punk vanguard had either faded away, died off, or were processed into alternate life forms not fit for human consumption. Hardcore was the prevailing face of punk now, a state of affairs of which the Ramones were not wholly unaware. Still, when a New York scene report in *Maximum Rocknroll* described the song they'd heard off the upcoming Ramones album as "ultra-thrash," one couldn't help but greet the news with a mixture of shock, glee, and cautious optimism. Released in October of that year, *Too Tough to Die* represented a simultaneous break with and return to the past: Tiring of the results (or lack thereof) brought about by the decade's parade of high-profile producers, the Ramones returned to the Record Plant with Tommy and Ed Stasium, the culprits behind *Road to Ruin*.

HEY! HO!
LET'S GO!

**GABBA
GABBA
HEY**



THE RAMONES WERE FATED TO MAKE THEIR LIVING TOURING THE WORLD IN A FIFTEEN-PASSENGER VAN.

With Joey's influence at low ebb due to the miscellaneous illnesses which dogged him throughout his career, the band returned to their earlier bang-bang recording procedures; Johnny took five songwriting credits to Joey's three, Dee Dee sings lead on two songs, and even Tommy and Richie contributed.

Too Tough to Die winds up being a masterful combination of returns to and departures from form: The album starts with a trio of thudding mid-tempo numbers, then slaloms crazily into four quick punk tunes. "Wart Hog" is the band's first sub-two-minute song since *Rocket to Russia*; "Durango 95," the band's first and only instrumental, is also their first song to clock in under a minute. Sire refuses to print the "Wart Hog" lyrics on the inner sleeve. PUNK! Abruptly, the album shifts to a suite of three keyboard-heavy pop compositions, all of which (egad!) *exceed four minutes in length*. The record spins off and eventually concludes with a few more punk songs (including the "ultra-thrash" "Endless Vacation," Dee Dee's attempt at a slow-fast-slow mosh number) and wraps up with a punkabilly thing hiccuped by Joey, becoming the first and only Ramones album of note to feature an odd number of songs—thirteen. The mixed styles and punk backbone work to perfection: *Too Tough to Die* is generally hailed as the band's best post-1979 effort. Predictably, it stiff—peaking at #171, a new low.

The blending of disparate elements works to far poorer effect on 1986's *Animal Boy*, which comes across as an ungainly grab bag of random songs played in random styles heading in random directions. Johnny stonewalls Joey's songwriting attempts, causing Joey to retreat to minor contributor status, thoughts of a solo record dancing in his head. Joey writes a little, Johnny writes a little, and Richie kicks in the album opening "Somebody Put Something in My Drink," but the brunt of the album's songwriting falls to Dee Dee. Dee Dee, in turn, frequently co-writes with label-mandated producer Jean Beauvoir, who, despite being a former Plasmatic, proves to be chiefly adept at writing watered-down synth shit. This time around, the gratuitous attempts to keep up with the hardcores—"Eat That Rat" and the title track—fall woefully short of the mark, like an old man trying to look younger by wearing a teenager's Negative Approach T-shirt.

The record is an incoherent jumble of punk, pop punk, synth barf, fake hardcore, and hard rock—yet, there are great songs on the album. It's just that no one can agree on what they are (I say "Crummy Stuff" for the win and fuck you). The band did take a rare political take with "Bonzo Goes to Bitburg"—Joey's paean of disgust for Ronald Reagan's state visit to a German cemetery in which numerous SS officers were buried. Reagan was Johnny's favorite president; Johnny mandated a title change to "My Brain Is Hanging Upside Down." The album peaked at #143, and makes an excellent jumping-off point for those not inclined to ride the project out to its bitter end.

Minus Jean Beauvoir's synth leanings, 1987's *Halfway to Sanity* was more of the same: Joey and Johnny had their hands on a few songs, Richie wrote a pair (both garbage), and the rest was Dee Dee, occasionally working with producer Daniel Rey at New York's Intergalactic Studios—producer and studio selected primarily because they came cheap. Dee Dee, who'd been the guy that contributed the bouncy punk numbers at the beginning of the decade, was now writing gloomy pre-grunge plodders like "I Wanna Live" and "Garden of Serenity"—the songs were becoming more like headaches than lobotomies. The songwriting partnership of Dee Dee and Johnny could still manufacture a ration of excitement with Ramone-by-numbers tunes like "Bop Til You Drop," "Weasel Face," and "I Lost My Mind," and Joey could still occasionally hit on something decent

like "Real Cool Time," but *Halfway to Sanity*, which peaked at #172, was the first Ramones album of which I could truthfully say I liked less than half. Perhaps it should have been called *Halfway to Quality*.

Irate over not getting a cut of the proceeds from band merch bearing his name, Richie walked offstage following a show in East Hampton, New York, and, in what surely most have been one of the most epic exit interviews of all time, promptly quit the band, stepped into a waiting limo, and was whisked off—reportedly to start a higher-paying new job as a caddy. Casting about for a swift mid-tour replacement, Johnny signed up Clem Burke (b. 11/24/1954), best known for his work with Blondie. Dubbed "Elvis Ramone," Clem/Elvis lasted all of two shows with the Ramones before Elvis was asked to leave the building. His replacement was none other than a dried-out Marky Ramone.

1988-'92: I LOST MY MIND

AND HERE, DEAR READERS, is where the wheels begin to come off the wagon for good.

Dee Dee, by this time, had become completely disenchanted with the Ramone life. A stint in rehab had turned him on to rap and hip hop, which he championed with missionary fervor. He had taken to dressing in full hip hop regalia, and created his own rap persona—Dee Dee King—under the aegis of which he had released "Funky Man," an eminently forgettable 12" single. While master of rap Dee Dee King kicked it old school, bass player Dee Dee Ramone had deteriorated to the point where he was more of a liability on stage than anything else. It was not uncommon to attend a Ramones performance and watch Johnny Ramone playing A-D-A-D whilst Dee Dee bounded about obliviously, playing D-A-D-A, the entire song through.

Worse, the band appeared to be possessed of an unshakable need to show those rotten kids who was boss in terms of who played the fastest live. To this end, they had managed to speed up their song tempos by having Marky adapt what must certainly be one of the highest-profile cheater beat techniques ever: Instead of playing in the traditional manner whereby the right hand keeps time on the hi-hat while the left hand plays the snare, Marky had taken to alternating his left hand between the snare and the hi-hat; with both hands working the hi-hat, he could play almost twice as quickly. The drawback to this approach was that it produced a fast, choppy rhythm, not a driving beat. In a band with a guitarist so militantly opposed to playing with anything but downstrokes, one wouldn't think the cheater beats would fly, but fly they did—the band's live prowess destroyed by their own hand. Adding insult to injury, the sacred tetragrammaton of rock'n'roll—"1-2-3-4!"—was now reduced to the role of window dressing. Dee Dee still yelled "1-2-3-4!" at the beginning of songs, but it was no longer a functioning count-in: While Dee Dee yelled his magic numbers, Johnny and Marky locked eyes, and started on a silent cue between themselves. Dee Dee could have counted to three or eight or 1,776 (assuming Dee Dee could actually count to 1,776)—it no longer mattered. Johnny and Marky started the songs, Dee Dee just read his line.

1989's *Brain Drain* album demonstrated that the stage was not the only place where the band no longer had their shit together: Apart from a slam-bang cover of Freddy Cannon's 1962 hit "Palisades Park," the album included little in terms of notable—or even listenable—material (unless you count the theme to the movie adaptation of Steven King's *Pet Sematary* or the annual nightmare of "Merry Christmas [I Don't

Want To Fight Tonight],” and who would?). Joey was back as a primary contributor—turns out we hadn’t missed much in the interim, as his songs were uniformly terrible. The album’s other main songwriters were Dee Dee and Daniel Rey, one of a three-producer consortium which included Jean Beauvoir and Bill Laswell. Dee Dee, unable to deal with his bandmates, sang on “Punishment Fits the Crime” and then went home, leaving the bass tracks to be supplied by Beauvoir, Rey, and former Dictator Andy Shernoff.

Manager Gary Kurfirst had landed Dee Dee King a record deal in return for the disgruntled Dee Dee not quitting the band, and, in spring of 1989, Dee Dee King’s utterly ludicrous *Standing in the Spotlight* was released, a record which had about as much to do with rap music as the Surf Punks had to do with surf music (or, for that matter, punk music). Dee Dee quit anyway, and *Brain Drain* peaked at #122 (which isn’t bad, considering that it’s actually worse than *Standing in the Spotlight*). A video was filmed and released. It was for 1978’s “I Wanna Be Sedated.”

In the band’s final lineup change, Dee Dee’s bass slot was awarded to Christopher Joseph Ward (b. 10/8/1965, not dead), thenceforth known as C.J. Ramone. While Johnny appreciated C.J.’s military background, the entire band would benefit from C.J.’s infusion of youthful vigor into their aging corps; he was well over a decade everyone else’s junior. C.J. debuted with the band on the Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon in September 1989, which seems like a pretty Ramone-y debut. On stage, C.J. came across as a younger, larger, more competent Dee Dee, preserving the band identity about as well as could be expected.

The Ramones’ touring portfolio began to radically expand its international holdings, with the band spending almost as much time on the road in Europe, Australia, Japan, and South America as they did domestically. In 1991, their second live album, *Loco Live*, was recorded in Barcelona and released (with slightly varying track listings) on Sire in the U.S. and Chrysalis in Europe. Anyone requiring evidence of the Ramones’ on-stage sonic deterioration need look no further than *Loco Live*’s thirty-odd songs: While playing faster live than on record is sorta the nature of the rock’n’roll beast, *Loco Live* stands as concrete evidence that juicing the rock by upping the tempo backfires horribly when taken to extremes. “Blitzkrieg Bop,” which originally clocked in at 2:12, runs for 1:45 on *Loco Live*, over 20% shorter. “Teenage Lobotomy” sees its running time whacked down from two minutes flat to 1:32, almost a quarter shorter. And “Sheena Is a Punk Rocker” gets its bloated 2:49 running time reduced to 1:48, the band somehow managing to lop over a minute off the running time of a song that wasn’t even three minutes long to begin with. Brevity is the soul of wit and all, but the problem with this approach isn’t that the songs are simply being played too rapidly for feeble ears to follow, the problem is that the songs are being played too rapidly for the band to actually play them properly. Take the four measures of guitar in the studio version of “Teenage Lobotomy” that immediately follow the “LOBOTOMY! LOBOTOMY!” part. If you count them out like a music nerd, they go 1-2-and-3-and, rest, 1-2-and-3-and, rest. If you count them out in the *Loco Live* versions, they go 1-2-and-3-4, 1-2-and-3-4. No rest. The entire rhythm of that part is subverted to the tempo, simplified to a choppy, childlike marching beat to facilitate additional velocity. It’s faster, but it sounds like garbage. Similarly, listening to Joey mutter, scat, and improvise through the chorus and bridge of “Sheena”—a song not given to undue complexity—leads the listener to wonder whether he can’t keep up, or if he just got bored with singing the song the right way. That all said, I do have to admit that I would have been *all over* the idea of a thirty-three-song album when I was fourteen. The album was certified gold in Brazil, which is probably the only context in which anyone will think of “Ramones” and “Brazilian wax” concurrently.

The band’s best album of the ’90s—and only album of that decade to not be recorded live or sound like a random assemblage of floor sweepings cobbled together to fulfill contractual obligation—proves to be 1992’s *Mondo Bizarro*. With Dee Dee in Detroit seeking fame and fortune with his new band, the Chinese Dragons, Joey regained his position as primary songwriter, knocking out a few pretty great pop punk hits in the process. Dee Dee continued to write songs for the band, because either 1) he needed the income, or 2) it was a



R.I.P.
PETER EICHHORN



P. TRASH

OUR GOOD FRIEND PETER 'P. TRASH' EICHHORN PASSED AWAY IN A CAR ACCIDENT IN JANUARY. THIS WAS A SHOCK AND A HUGE BLOW. WE HAVE WORKED WITH PETER FOR YEARS (BOTH WITH NFI AND WITH BANDS THAT WE ARE IN) AND IT HAS BEEN NOTHING BUT AN ABSOLUTE PLEASURE.

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THE RAMONES ARE THE LAST BAND TO EXIST BEFORE THE RAMONES INVENTED (OR AT LEAST MASTERED AND CODIFIED) PUNK: THEY ARE THE FINAL BAND OF THE PRE-PUNK ERA, THE END OF THE LINE.

condition of the band bailing him out of jail, depending on which story you believe. Unfortunately, Dee Dee's songs tended to be in his later, mopey, mid-tempo style, which have never done a hell of a lot for me. Someone must like them, though, as Dee Dee's "Poison Heart" and "Strength to Endure" were selected as the album's two singles, despite the latter being sung by C.J., not exactly the face of the franchise. The band ended their fifteen-year association with Sire Records, jumping ship to Radioactive Records—a label which just so happened to be owned by manager Gary Kurfirst. *No conflict of interest there!* Predictably, the album peaked at #190, a new low. Johnny was now and forever locked out of the songwriting process; his final songwriting credit came in 1989. On the bright side, the album was produced by *Road to Ruin's* Ed Stasium, so at least it sounds like a fucking Ramones album.

1993-'96: JUST LIKE THE CATS IN THE GARBAGE CAN, WHEN THEIR TIME'S COMING, MAN

PUNK WAS ON THE REBOUND in the early '90s, drawing renewed media attention and—for some—unprecedented record sales. A new generation of punk superstars cited the Ramones as key influences, but Joey still wanted to be a pop star, not a pop star's father figure, and bitterly dismissed just about any punk band anyone could name as a "Ramones rip off band." Johnny, of course, just wanted the money. The punk resurgence did nothing for the band's flagging fortunes on the radio, but it *was* great for T-shirt sales.

In 1993, the band released *Acid Eaters*, an album of nothing but '60s covers. Produced by ex-late-stage-TSOL guitarist Scott Hackwith, the album largely sidestepped the bubblegum and dumb-but-fun hits the band had plumbed in the past, focusing more on *Nuggets*-era garage (Love, Seeds, Amboy Dukes) and straight-up big-name rock (Who, CCR, Dylan). While the band's take on Love's "7&7 Is" is a thing of sledgehammer beauty, there is a very short list of Bob Dylan songs I imagine I would enjoy the Ramones covering, and "My Back Pages" sure the hell ain't on it. C.J. sang lead on three of the twelve songs, including the album-opening "Journey to the Center of the Mind." If you think it seems odd to start a Ramones album off with C.J.'s lead vocals on a cover originally played on by Ted Nugent, you're not alone.

The band's studio output wheezed to a halt in 1995, with *¡Adios Amigos!*, the band's fourteenth and final studio album. Joey had always been a generally unhealthy guy; the addition of cancer to his stable of woes proved to be too great a hurdle for even the Ramones to overcome, and the band prepared to shutter the windows the following year. The album's material is a patchwork of slush, leaning heavily on Dee Dee-penned numbers and covers; C.J. sang any song deemed too fast for Joey to manage. The record had a few glimmers of the old spirit here and there, but, on the whole, was clearly the sound of a band on its last legs, limping to the finish line. Not to let a dead horse go unflogged, *Greatest Hits Live* was released the next year. The band managed to lop two more seconds off the running time of "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker" since 1991's *Loco Live*, now 1:46 as opposed to 1:48. OH, THANK HEAVENS! The number of albums released by the Ramones in the '90s: Six. The number of originals written by the Ramones in the '90s: Fourteen.

On August 6, 1996—Hiroshima's fifty-first anniversary—the Ramones would play their 2,263rd and final show. The quintessential New York band would culminate their groundbreaking, two-decade

career with one final, triumphant return to... Los Angeles? The concert—recorded and released the next year as a CD/DVD set titled *We're Outta Here!*—featured copious dollops of that most Los Angeles-ish of conceits: pointless celebrity guest appearances. At various times during the set, the band would share the stage with Lemmy from Motörhead, Lars Frederiksen and Tim Armstrong of Rancid (?), Chris Cornell and Ben Shepherd of Soundgarden (?), Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam (???), and Dee Dee—who would try—and fail—to remember the words to "Love Kills," which, now that I think about it, makes perfect sense. The only way the performance could have been more Los Angelistic would have been to have Penny Marshall eating a hot dog, Larry King behind home plate, and Jack Nicholson yelling at the refs. The band's final song ever was not "Today Your Love, Tomorrow the World," nor "We're a Happy Family," nor any of a hundred other genre-defining classics. Instead, the band would majestically conclude their epoch-making twenty-two-year run with... their recently learned cover of the Dave Clark Five's "Anyway You Want It," featuring Eddie Vedder on vocals. Well, maybe it was good for T-shirt sales.

1996-END: ENDLESS VACATION

THE REST OF THE STORY you probably know: Joey released a solo album, *Don't Worry About Me* and died of lymphoma in 2001, with the city of New York erecting a "Joey Ramone Place" street sign on Bowery at 2nd Street in his honor. A second solo album, *...Ya Know?*, was released posthumously. The Ramones were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in March 2002; three months later Dee Dee was found dead of an overdose in his Hollywood home. Johnny died of cancer in 2004, with Tommy following suit in 2014. I've heard of bands with no original members before, but this is taking the concept a bit too far. As for the enlisted men, Marky brought a certain form of mirth to some of us while touring with the Invaders and the Speed Kings, while C.J. played in a number of bands, most notably Los Gusanos and the Rmainz—a short-lived Ramones cover band with Marky, Dee Dee, and Dee's Dee's wife. More recently, C.J. released a couple of solo albums on Fat. Richie tours and records sporadically, and Elvis was last seen at a Michigan 7-11.

Einstein is sometimes referred to as "the last classicist," despite the fact that it was his theories of quantum mechanics which upended classical physics. So, too, is it with the Ramones: For many intents and purposes, the Ramones are the first punk band—the Alpha, the architects. In another sense, the Ramones are the last band to exist before the Ramones invented (or at least mastered and codified) punk: They are the final band of the pre-punk era, the end of the line. The Ramones were not motivated by the punky concerns of modern times, like creating a DIY culture, sidestepping corporate tentacles, or sticking it to The Man: They wanted to sell millions of records and make a lot of money. It is this precise blend of genius with are-you-kidding-me obliviousness that allowed them to think that they could actually become the biggest band in the world by singing about chainsaws, pinheads, and lobotomies. It is to this, uh, "special" blend of gifts we all owe a debt of gratitude that we are collectively unlikely to repay. When Principal Togar lectured the students at Vince Lombardi High about "a record that will follow you all through your life," it was highly unlikely she realized she was talking, in my case, about *Rocket to Russia*. Gabba Gabba Hey and thanks for listening.



TOP 5

Adam Perry

- Hot Water Music, *Dead To Me*, Racquet Club at Slim's, San Francisco
- Chuck Ragan and Dave Hause at Goldfield Trading Post, Sacramento
- Propagandhi, *Victory Lap*
- Lemuria, *Recreational Hate*
- Everyone's friend Brandy Nichole Haile (1980-2018), who always reminded those she loved to "Please Believe!"

Alicia Armijo

- "'M' is for Morphine" by World/Inferno Friendship Society
- "Freedom Is a Wilderness" by World/Inferno Friendship Society
- "Rise" by Twin Scars
- "Rodan" by Stampede Mesa
- "Guacamole Party" by The Guacamole Police

Aphid Peewit

- MDC, *Mein Trumpf* CD
- Lumpy And The Dumpers, *Those Pickled Fuckers* LP
- United Teachers Of Music, *Dreams of Beasts Must Die* LP
- Dead Ending, *Shoot the Messenger* LP
- *The New York Hardcore Chronicles* DVD

Art Ettinger

- Future Virgins, *Doomsday Raga* LP
- The Last Gang, *Keep Them Counting* LP
- Various Artists, *American Oi! Texas Edition* LP
- Various Artists, *14 Soda Punx* LP
- 45 Adapters, *They Call It Justice 7"*

Bill Pinkel

- Future Virgins, *Doomsday Raga* LP
- Quicksand, *Interiors* LP
- Total Control, *Laughing at the System* LP

- Mind Spiders, *Furies* LP
- The Lillingtons live at the Viper Room!

Billy Kostka

- Cruel Ties, *No Prisoner*
- Total Control, *Laughing at the System*
- Mordecai, *Live 2017*
- Marbled Eye, *EP2*
- Beta Boys, *Brick Walls*

Candace Hansen

- Top Five Distillers Songs I Hope They Play at the Reunion. ("City of Angels" doesn't count of course they're gonna play it.)*
1. "Blackest Years"
 2. "Sick of It All"
 3. "Hall of Mirrors"
 4. "World Comes Tumblin' Down"
 5. "Gypsy Rose Lee"

Chris Mason

1. Mind Spiders, *Furies* LP
2. Canadian Rifle, *Peaceful Death* LP
3. Bugg, Self-titled LP
4. The Number Ones, *Another Side of The Number Ones 7"*
5. girlSperm, Self-titled 12"

Chris Terry

- Songs For Snakes / If It Kills You, Split 7"
- The Fall, assorted Peel Sessions on YouTube
- Bat Fangs, Self-titled LP
- Danzy Senna, *New People* (novel)
- M.P. Johnson, *Nails* (novella)

Craven Rock

1. Launch of our cuck podcast, *Two Paychecks*
2. Ceschi Ramos, Sammus, hERON, cars and trains at Subspace
3. Shredders, Astronautalis at Chop Suey
4. *Everything Is Terrible: The Great Satan* at Central Cinema

5. *Serpents in the Garden: Liaisons with Culture & Sex*, by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair

Cynthia Pinedo

Five Bands I've Had on Repeat Lately

1. The Groans: This queer punk band hails from the Inland Empire. These QTs are so talented and so great live! *Everything for Everyone* is so good, and "BEBO Song" is a tribute to dogs that is always stuck in my head (in a good way).
2. Bad Cop/Bad Cop: OC/LA band Bad Cop have been killing it. Their album *Warriors* came out last year, and is full of jams. "Womanarchist" is such a powerful song; so important right now.
3. Weird Night: OC band Weird Night (formerly White Night) is lo-fi pop punk goodness, and I've had their self-titled album playing so much. "AI" and "Seis Seis Seis" are some of my favorite tracks.
4. Jawbreaker: So excited for their three nights at The Palladium.
5. The Bananas: Love them, and have probably listened to them more than any other band this year so far.

Daryl Gussin

- Mind Spiders, *Furies* LP, tie with Total Control, *Laughing at the System* LP
- La Tuya CD
- Biznaga, *Sentido del Espectaculo* LP
- Color TV, *Paroxeteens 7"*
- Swingin' Utters, *Drowning in the Sea*, *Rising with the Sun* 2 x LP

Designated Dale

1. Nightmare Boyzzz playing again! New material hopefully in the works?
2. Molotov rocking and ruling the La Tocado Music Festival. Mexico City's own never, ever disappoints.
3. The Sriracha-Chas debut full-length. Quote the late, great Cyrus: "Can you dig it?!"

4. La Tuya record release party at Cafe NELA, with extra special thanks to those clocking the extra miles to be there.
5. Razorcake celebrating its seventeenth year (!) by the time you read this. You're fucking welcome!

Eric Baskauskas

- Top 5 Band Names That Everyone Else in My New Hardcore Band Hated. You Can Use Them.*
1. Earth O.D.
 2. Clear Distaste
 3. Big Bro
 4. Anticene
 5. Steamed

Joe Dana

- Top 5 Things about Razorcake <3s Drinking Beer and Listening to Records First Annual Chili Cook Off*
5. We had a nice ratio of vegan/veggie to meat chilis
 4. We had trophies, great music, and our great venue, Footsies!
 3. Luci Acosta won the People's Choice Medal
 2. Matt of Madison Bloodbath won second place and Amanda Jones won the first place trophy
 1. There'll be a Second Annual Chili Cook Off. Second Saturday of January 2019. Make plans to compete now!

Jim Woster

- 5 Movies from the Early '80s That Would Be Better-Known Had They Come Out in the '70s*
- *Absence of Malice*
 - *Frances*
 - *Modern Romance*
 - *Prince of the City*
 - *Taps*

Iggy Nicklbottum

- Top 5 Best Moments at Curating Resistance: Punk as Archival Method Conference at UCLA*
1. A collection of the best in women punk and rock of the '90s reminiscing on their best and worst moments in their careers, as well as giving their advice to young punks.

Free croissants

2. *Lobotomy Mag* panel was nothing but laughs. Every little party and moment was told in great detail, at the delight of the entire panel.
 3. The tour of the archival collection of punk. Many small and interesting artifacts are being saved for future generations.
 4. It was reunion of a lot of local older "classic" punks who were ecstatic to see one another. I was the youngest one.
 5. It was student-run and they had plenty of free croissants.

Juan Espinosa

- Mind Spiders, *Furies* LP
- Neanderthal, *A History of Violence* 12"
- Intensive Care, *Everything Has Its Price* 7"
- Mortician, *Darkest Day of Horror* LP (reissue)
- Bugg, Self-titled LP

Genesis Bautista

Bands I've Recently Seen

- Gauze
- Framtid
- Mortician, Lab
- The Geros
- Cremalleras

Kayla Greet

1. Seattle Pop Punk Fest (especially Sicko, Listen Lady, Ramona, Dead Bars, and Choke The Pope) at The Highline
2. Mind Spiders, *Furies*
3. Ex Friends, *Rules for Making Up Words*
4. Canadian Rifle, *Peaceful Death*
5. *The Drop Target* Omnibus, by Jon Chad and Alec Longstreth (Liz Prince and I are published here!)

Kevin Dunn

1. Pink Collar Jobs, *Anthology*
2. Mind Spiders, *Furies*
3. Choke The Pope, *Emotional Material*
4. Black Paw, Self-titled EP
5. Lemuria, *Recreational Hate*

Kurt Morris

1. *White American Youth* by Christian Picciolini (book)
2. *Smoke City* by Keith Rosson (book)
3. *I Feel Weird* #1 & #2 (zines)
4. Converge, *The Dusk in Us*
5. Drive Like Jehu, *Yank Crime*

MariNaomi

- Some Great Comics I Just Read*
1. Carrie McNinch's *You Don't Get There from Here* diary comics are still going strong!
 2. *The Complete Strange Growths* by Jenny Zervakis
 3. *Melody* by Sylvie Rancourt
 4. *Southwest Roadtrip* zine by Hellen Jo and Ines Estrada
 5. *Trains* by Mandy Ord

Mark Twistworthy

- Feature, *Banishing Ritual* LP
- The Stroppies, Self-titled LP
- Superchunk, *What a Time to Be Alive* LP
- High Rise, *II* LP reissue
- Mean Jeans, *Jingles Collection* LP

Megan Razzetti

- Top 5 Songs That I Really Like Right Now*
- "Onion of My Eye" by Fleshes
 - "Crumble" by Dinosaur Jr.
 - "My Beautiful Ruin" by Sundowner
 - "Sour Candy" by Bleached
 - "Cut Yr Teeth" by Kississippi

Michael T. Fournier

- Keith Rosson, *Smoke City* (book)
- Mind Spiders, *Furies*
- Sriracha-chas, Self-titled debut
- Rules, *Pronouns*
- The World, *First World Record*

Michelle Kirk

- Top 5 "Summer in February" List*
1. "Gone for the Summer," Telephone Lovers
 2. "Sunsetz," Cigarettes After Sex
 3. "They Put a Body in the Bayou," The Orwells
 4. *Worship the Sun*, The Allah-Las
 5. *King of the Beach*, Wavves

Mike Faloon

1. Johanna Crane, *Scrambling for Africa* (book)
2. Guided By Voices, *August* by Cake LP
3. *Mind Mgmt: The Immortals*, Matt Kindt (graphic novel)
4. Little Milton, *His Greatest Sides* LP
5. Safes, *Tasty Waves* LP

Mike Frame

1. Amyl And The Sniffers, entire catalog
2. Doug Sahm, entire catalog
3. Razor Boys, Self-titled LP
4. The Crack, *In Search Of* LP
5. *Godless / Ozark* series, *Hostiles* (movie)

DJ Naked Rob

Radio Valencia 87.9FM, SFCA

1. Neighborhood Brats, *Night Shift* 7"
2. Centuries, *The Lights of This Earth Are Blinding* LP
3. Nomos 751, Self-titled LP
4. Easy Prey, *Teeth* CS
5. The Devils, *Iron Butt* LP

Paul Silver

1. Canadian Rifle, *Peaceful Death* LP
2. Horror Squad, Turkish Techno, DFMK, Secondaries, Tracy Soto at Characters, Pomona, Calif.
3. Miss New Buddha, Dark Black, Lanterns at Blonde Bar, San Diego
4. Horror Squad, *Death Posi* LP
5. La Escalera New Year's Eve at Til-Two San Diego, with Heartless Folk, International Dipshit, The Dodges, Ash Williams, Bossfight, Se Vende, Gentlemen Prefer Blood, Rayner, Western Settings, and Problem Daughter

Rene Navarro

1. My wife got me a ticket to see Jawbreaker.
2. Roy Orbison, *Mystery Girl* CD
3. No Statik, *Unity & Fragmentation* CD
4. The Kinks, *Misfits* LP
5. Hüsker Dü, *Metal Circus* LP

Rev. Nørh

- Razz, *Time Frames* 12" 45
- New Rocket Union, Self-titled CDEP
- The Jam, 1977 box set
- Rik & The Pigs, *Blue Jean Queen* 45
- Sweet Knives, "Burnt Sienna Blues" b/w "I Don't Wanna See" 45

Rich Cocksedge

- Newport County 1 Spurs 1 - F.A. Cup 4th Round (and the subsequent replay at Wembley Stadium, despite losing 0-2)
- La Tuya, debut CD from L.A. punks ("Fuck the Cheeto king!")
- Drug Victim, *Worry* 7"
- Timeshares, *On Life Support* EP, tie with The Mendozaz, *Two Days to Retirement* LP
- Death Pedals, Self-titled, tie with A Vulture Wake, *The Appropriate Level of Outrage*

Ryan Nichols

1. Bored Dudes
2. Human Leather, *Lazy Karaoke* LP
3. *The Story of Crass* by George Berger (book)

4. Caifanes at The Observatory in Santa Ana, Calif.
5. Shame, *Songs of Praise* LP

Sal Lucci

1. Terminal Mind, *Recordings* LP
2. Lumpy And The Dumpers, *Those Pickled Fyckers* LP
3. Cowboys, *3rd LP* LP
4. Joe Meek, *Hits from Holloway Road* LP
5. *Warfaring Strangers: Acid Nightmares* LP

Sean Arenas

- MACHINEkit, *DYSAPPEARENCER* LP
- Boys Order, *Do the Wild Cat* LP
- Hummingbird Of Death, *Forbidden Techniques* LP
- The Fadeaways, "Sick and Tired" b/w "Long Gone (The Customs)" 7"
- No Statik, *Unity & Fragmentation* LP

Sean Koepenick

- Bands That Deserve Their Own Beer*
1. The Ramones
 2. The Replacements
 3. The Clash
 4. Anti-Nowhere League
 5. New Model Army

Theresa Warburton

1. Career, *Structures*
2. Couch Slut, *Contempt*
3. Longclaw, *Patterns*
4. Open City, Self-titled
5. LAPêCHE, *The Second Arrow*

Toby Tober

- Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed*
1. *Lucky*
 2. *The Orville*
 3. Mike Judge Presents: *Tales from the Tour Bus*
 4. *Good Time*
 5. *Band Aid*

Todd Taylor

- Total Control, *Laughing at the System* LP tie
- Mind Spiders, *Furies* LP
- Biznaga, *Sentido del Espectaculo* LP
- Marriage Material, *Making the Worry Worth It, Part I* 7"
- Caves, *Always Why* LP tie
- ONSIND, *We Wilt, We Bloom* LP
- Booji Boys, *Weekend Rocker* LP tie
- The Rippers, *A Gut Feeling* LP



7 YEARS: *Lifetime*: CD

As a fan of melodic hardcore and punk of the '90s and early '00s, there was much about 7 Years to be stoked on, and it was easy to pick up on their influences on the title track, "Never Down," and others. "Never Down," is notable for a guest appearance by Joey Cape of Lagwagon. Apart from these highlights, there was a bland sameness to many of the thirteen songs on *Lifetime*. This repetitiveness killed the vibe for me after multiple listens. A strong five-song EP could easily have been distilled from the recordings on *Lifetime*, but as it stands, the rest of the songs dilute the strength of the best material. —Paul J. Comeau (Morning Wood)

A MILLION MACHINES: *Self-titled*: CD

Synth pop reminiscent of Depeche Mode, but updated and more polished. Musically, they're pretty dancey, yet staid. The singer reminds me of the guy from Interpol. In a not too distant past, A Million Machines would have been in heavy rotation on stations like KROQ. This music won't upset or challenge the listener in any way. If "People are People" is your jam, then check this out. —Matt Average (Vext / A Million Machines, amillionmachines.com)

ACID BLOOD: *Dagger Eyes*: 7" EP

Driving hardcore from Umeå from a band with ties to AC4, Crystal Caravan, and The Vectors. Tunes are entrenched in the gray space between '80s hardcore and the street-rat leather 'n' denim metal of Motörhead and very early Voivod. They deliver in spades tracks with bite that never take themselves too seriously. —Jimmy Alvarado (Jan ML, janml-records.de)

ADAM FRANCE! / WELL OKAY: *Nothing Mattress*: Split EP

Four songs on acoustic guitars that would make Tim Barry choke up while choking down a beer. It's sweet and painful when people take songs they've been incubating within their own skulls and finally put them to record to share with the rest of the world. Solo work has the tendency to get incredibly intimate and these tracks about heartache and home loss do just that. On the A Side it's Adam France! from bands like Burn Burn Burn and Arms Aloft—which already have woefully honest folks penning the lyrics to those groups—and this instance is par for the course. France sings songs about moving out and moving on with a shadow of a tambourine in the background keeping pace with his acoustic. The B Side is more of the same vein with Well Okay belting out emotional scars alongside a harmonica. All tracks feel just as if you're in their bedroom with them, watching them craft the melodies and relive the stories behind the lyrics. Perfect for those retrospective moments in life. —Kayla Greet (Tiny Dragon)

ANTICHRIST DEMONCORE / GOOLAGOON: *Split*: 7"

I've gone on record as not being particularly impressed by Antichrist

RECORD REVIEWS



Maybe I'm naïve, but I do still think pissed-off political hardcore like this can make a difference, even at this late date. Punk don't fail me now.

—Aphid Peewit
—MDG, Mein Trumpf CD

Demoncore in the past, but damn these tracks are surprisingly good. Powerviolence way past any of the waves that actually mattered but it holds its own. Goolagoon try to get a little goofier with Spongebob samples, but their side of the split is more paint-by-numbers hyperspeed thrash that not even a Scholastic Deth cover could save. The artwork and packaging (printed dust sleeve and fold-out Ouija board poster insert) is pretty fucking cool, though. —Juan Espinosa (To Live A Lie)

ARNOCORPS: *Unbelievable*: CD

Godfathers of adventure hardcore celebrating the cinematic oeuvre of master thespian Arnold "It's not a tumor!" Schwarzenegger. From *Batman* ("Mr. Freeze") to *Twins*, all movies from the 1990s, before he was sidelined with being placed into the role of governor of California from some distraught Republican businessmen. Listening to this, I get the sense that they are more of a band to be experienced live than from the stereo of your large SUV tearing up the roads of Malibu and Bel Air, or perhaps the gym. —Matt Average (Alternative Tentacles, alternativetentacles.com)

AYRON JONES: *Audio Paint Job*: CD

Seattle-born Ayrton Jones and the rest of the "Boys from the Puget Sound" clearly know their music. Well-versed in rock'n'roll, hip hop, and blues, Jones is like a sound alchemist brewing his own soulful concoction that would make Jimi Hendrix, James Brown, and Prince equally proud. The multitalented musician can shred his electric guitar over 3/4 blues rhythms and croon R&B melodies over weighty rock riffs. He can sing with grit and defiance

just as well as smooth heartache. The seamlessness with which the artist juxtaposes genres is truly baffling and impressive. Like an audience before a swift magician, we never see how the trick is done. This is no case of mistaken identity, but rather a skillful fusion and integration of selves. Music lovers of all types (or, for that matter, anyone with two ears and a heart) will be moved by this record. —Michelle Kirk (Sunyata, sunyatarecords.com)

AZONIC: *Prospect of the Deep Volume One*: CDEP

Picked this up out of my stack and thought to myself: "Okay, three songs. This will be a breeze." Then the total track time came up on my CD player: forty-seven minutes! "Danger, Will Robinson-Danger!" Did some more exploring and the instruments listed seal the deal: seven string and doubleneck guitar, timpani, concert bass drum, and gong. I do listen to instrumental music now and again, but these pieces gave me the creeps. Experimental without a doubt. I'm not even sure if this falls into a prog bucket, but I'm not really up for sticking my head in a wheelbarrow for a wet apple today. —Sean Koepenick (Indivisible Music, info@indivisiblemusic.com)

BAD DADDIES: *Over 30 Singles*: LP

Bad Daddies are one of those bands I've long heard about but never actually heard (or at least not to my recollection), so I was looking forward to rectifying that situation. Based on the name alone, I pretty much figured 'em for a swagger-punk band heavy on Dolls and hot rods, so the wall of feedback right out of the starting gate, one that rarely goes away throughout, was a bit of a surprise. Lotta short,

feral hardcore stompers rule the roost here, but things get particularly interesting when they a) sneak some wicked-catchy hooks underneath the unrelenting din with a backbeat that sounds like anvils crashing through one ceiling after another; b) push at the corners and things either take on a bit of an arty sheen or just deconstruct altogether. Tons of creativity going on within some narrow parameters they've set for themselves, a quality that always separates the notable from the rest of the schmoe. A fan, and a hearty recommendation, they've gained here. Comes with a zine featuring interviews with assorted members, liner notes, pics, and so on so's you have something to read while wrecking your hearing. —Jimmy Alvarado (Emotional Response)

BAD EXAMPLE:

Tethered in Deviancy: CS

Behind the proper and courteous exterior of the Southern veil, lies generations of bigotry, sexism, racism, and fear. Try identifying/existing/being as anything other than a cis white male down here. Hell, just try not identifying with college football. Put a mic and some instruments in the hands of open-hearted forward-thinking young Alabama humyns and you've got a hardcore band raging, thrashing, and tearing that veil to shreds. Cavernous, dark lyricism and tunes that capture all the best bits of blast beats, breakdowns, and breakneck punk. The recording is slightly murky, but the sincerity and execution of the songs lift this release well above any loss of fidelity. November *MRR* live action cover models to boot! —Matt Seward (Not Normal Tapes)

BAD HEAVEN LTD: *Cool Hell*: LP

I love this record. Mixing gloom and pop, Bad Heaven LTD sounds like if Elliott Smith and Granddaddy joined forces. Delicate vocals hover over bright guitar and an understated low end. *Cool Hell* is a perfect sun shower of an album: heartfelt, desperate, but with a bit of hope peeking through the clouds. There's a one hundred percent chance this'll be on heavy rotation for the next few months. —Simone Carter (Square Of Opposition, squareofopposition.com)

BAD NERVE: *The Lost Ones*: LP

Excellent punk rock that comes at you hard, but with severely strong tunefulness, and played at varying tempos for maximum impact. For only three people (Jonas Lyxzen, guitarist from DS-13 is playing drums here) they make a sonic ruckus. The songs are tightly wound and can change pace without missing a beat. Songs come on fast and in your face, then the next they shift down to something a little more mid tempo, such as the frantic "We Are the Lost Ones," to the masher "There Was No Golden Age." My favorite track here is "Not a Perfect World." It's the most poppy of the set but with a melancholy side. The backing vocals from Melody Almoth elevate this

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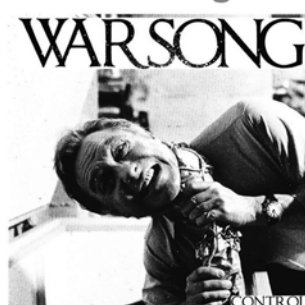
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song to the next level, and give it more depth. If you're a fan of bands like the Red Dons and Masshysteri, then seek this one out. —Matt Average (Ny Våg, nyvagrerecords@gmail.com)

BARBECUTIES: *Eternal Dorkness*: CD

This is a hard hell-no from me. I guess it's probably that I'm not into casual misogyny as a way to finger the edge, but I'm perfectly happy throwing a CD that has a song about how Betty Boop is probably just frustrated because she "just don't get no cock," a "fucking slut" who is "pretentious as fuck, spoiled as hell, no boobs" directly into the garbage. Alongside other songs like "Coffee Shop Girl," "Cute Stoned Psychedelic Girl," and "Pop Punk 101" (in which the singer laments that girls don't like him because he likes punk rock better than whatever their stupid interests are), the only use of this record is to show people what you mean when you talk about the problems of misogyny in punk music. Maybe they think it's funny and maybe other men will too and maybe that's the problem. —Theresa W. (Monster Zero)

BEDFORD FALLS: *Send More Bees*: LP/CD

Bloody hell, it's hard to believe that it's been six years since Bedford Falls released its last album, the wonderful *Elegant Balloons*. That is a lifetime to many bands, but *Send More Bees* is just the third long player in sixteen years from this Welsh-based outfit. The wait is worth it though, as the

intervening years have seen the band add a touch of Americana into its work, to sit neatly alongside the undeniable influence of Superchunk and Hüsker Dü. The big guitar sound still resonates loudly whilst cymbals crash noisily, but it's frequently countered by a dose of melancholy via Tom Willecome's vocals. Another wonderful collection of songs. —Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage / Brassneck / Dead Broke)

BEGGARS: *Spitting Venom*: LP

Heady mix of hardcore and hard rock. Usually that's the kiss of death for these ears, but they pull it off, recalling both early Iron Maiden and early Corrosion Of Conformity in some passages. Thumbs up. —Jimmy Alvarado (ColumbusBlood)

BIKINI COPS: *Three:7"*

These Aussies left me breathless after one listen of this single, so imagine how drained I felt having played it six times in a row. It's only on the sixth and final track that there is even the remote sense of slowing down, but even that is more of a cursory nod in the direction of applying the brakes. Needless to say, Bikini Cops rocks with an infectious enthusiasm as it knocks out some trashy garage tunes resulting in me being willing to recommend this to all and sundry. —Rich Cocksedge (Drunken Sailor)

BLACK ADIDAS: *Self-titled*: CD

I'm generally put off when a vocalist yells "guitar" before a bridge or solo,

even more so when it's delivered pretty flat and unenthusiastic as it is with Black Adidas. Sometimes when I'm about to review something new, I take a look at the package and guess what the band is going to sound like, based on their art. With the high contrast black and orange photos of motorcycles and greaser-looking guys, I suspected Social Distortion. What I got in the first thirty seconds was a dead ringer for a Mike Ness impersonator. Though, as a whole, it is more than that. They did in fact take away the old ball and chain at times. And there's a myriad of unconventional instrumentation as well. Never did I expect to hear synthesizers or trombone in this group, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. While it's still not something that gets my motor running (Mike Ness is nails on a chalk board to me), it'd be great for grease monkeys who keep trying to get Joy Division played at their shop. —Kayla Greet (Digital Analog, digitalanalogrecords.com)

BLIND IDIOT GOD: *Undertow*: CD

A reissue of their second album, originally unleashed in 1988 on Enemy Records. Instrumental music that uses metal as its base then globes on heaps of punk, noise, dub reggae, funk, and free jazz to keep things moving down several different alleys at the same time. Includes as bonus tracks two collaborations; one with Henry Rollins on the title track to the film *Freaked*, and one with John Zorn.

—Jimmy Alvarado (Indivisible Music Group, indivisiblemusic.com)

BOBBY'S OAR: *What I'm Looking For*: LP

I've seen Greg Hughes (the man behind Bobby's Oar) play these songs with just him and a guitar. Those songs made my eyes well up, gave a catch in my throat, and even a few chills. What's so fantastic about Greg is he can give a sincere delivery each and every time. People can only pull that off when it's genuine. So when I got to hear these earnest tracks put to drums, backup vocals, banjos, bass, and trombone, it only amplified the kindness and concern in his voice. This record is a playground of positivity one might see the likes of Jeff Rosenstock and Kepi Ghoulie hanging out in. You don't have to have an electric guitar to be considered punk. "400 Dollars" is a song about the pains of shared living and it is relatable to every punk house I've ever lived in. Lyrics like, "It takes a toll on me, all the dirty dishes and the caving floorboard," and, "We gave you a level head till we were stepped on" are so spot on. Greg paints incredibly detailed murals with every word that escapes his mouth. Bobby's Oar is more than just folk punk. They're dynamic, catchy, and honest. Maybe the best I can put it is that Bobby's Oar is Cometbus put to music. Whether I get my point across or not, just do me a favor and check out this record at least once to see if it grabs you like it did me. Test drive it on bandcamp

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—Kayla Greet (Tiny Dragon Music, tinydragonmusic@gmail.com)

BOTOX RATS: *Nasty Business*: LP

Album number two from these London malcontents, rife with a mix of sleazy punk and pitch perfect pop that plops them in the same sonic terra as west coast talent stables Hostage and Modern Action records. Hit after hit and not a clunker in the bunch. —Jimmy Alvarado (Wanda, wandarecords.de)

BOW & SPEAR: *Bad at Fun*: 12"

These dudes may be bad at fun, but they're damn good at writing music. The latest release from Chicago's Bow & Spear is at once caustic and beautiful, eviscerating your eardrums while lifting your spirits. Combining grunge and shoegaze, Bow & Spear strikes a perfect balance by marrying angelic melodies with profane shredding. My one qualm is that *Bad at Fun* is only seven songs long. Maybe next time they'll go for a full-length? That would make me one happy fan. —Simone Carter (What's For Breakfast?, wfbrecords@gmail.com, wfbrecords.com)

BOYS ORDER: *Do the Wild Cat*: LP

A few years ago, Secret Mission released the debut 7" from this downright mind-blowing Japanese power pop trio. *Do the Wild Cat* is their long-awaited full-length, and it's an instant classic. Boys Order is made up of members of Thee Bossmen and Teenage Lust, fronted

by Chihiro Isadora from the essential Radio Shanghai and Prambath. Her vocals are precisely what make poppy Japanese punk so fucking infectious, with an inimitable charm that makes it hard to pull this LP off of the turntable. Limited to five hundred copies, with only two hundred available in the U.S. Now is the time to scoop up this soon to be canonical slab of pop perfection. —Art Ettinger (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

BOYS ORDER: *Do the Wild Cat*: LP

On the recent M.O.T.O. tribute compilation from Secret Mission, Boys Order, from Japan, nailed a pitch perfect cover of "Deliver," so I was excited to snag their debut full length—and, without hyperbole, it's one of the catchiest records I've ever heard. *Do the Wild Cat* opens with the bubbly powerpop gem "W.A.V.E!"—and from there on out Boys Order is unstoppable. The title track somehow shifts from a propulsive verse to a mid-tempo chorus without screeching to a halt while "Blue Blue Red" includes every infectious pop device imaginable: "oohs," keyboards, a propulsive bassline, and vocal harmonies. (Also, any record with a song called "Party! Party! Party!" is right by me.) By the time "Run after Shadows" closes the record with a gleeful climax, saxophone and all, Boys Order hasn't stumbled once. *Do the Wild Cat* is pure, unadulterated powerpop perfection. —Sean Arenas (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

BROKEN DEAD: *Extent of Pain*: CD

I'm impressed by how polished and extensive this CD is for something self-released. Lots of artwork, full lyrics sheet. It's clear this band is throwing everything they have into it and that comes out in the recording, too. Totally enjoyable metal/hardcore combo with great vocals and some killer double bass action in a few places. There are some great moments of more melodic guitar work, tempo changes, and quick breakdowns that add texture to what would otherwise be a really straightforward record. This is the kind of band a scene could build up around; totally committed and creative enough that it's clear they are just getting started. —Theresa W. (Self-released)

BURNING SPRING / CUDDLEFISH: *Split: 7" EP*

Burning Spring are going to be your D.C. (Jawbox)/ first Screw 32 LP cup o' tea. Bouncing and sweet, but with an echo of depth to keep you warm. Early Dischord fans will be pleased. Cuddlefish is heat. White hot emotional incineration. They will make you fight, cry, hug, and fall down, singing and swaying, exhausted, all in the same two minutes. If Unfun (the band) meant anything to you, Cuddlefish will be your new best friend. —Matt Seward (Debt Offensive)

C.H.E.W. / PENETRODE: *Split: 7"*

C.H.E.W.: Completely feral hardcore punk with a woman singer who shrieks righteous bile like, "Taught

to chase a future that isn't mine/ the game's been fucked since before our time." From Chicago. Stands for Cop Hating Exploited Workers. Penetrode: Loose old school hardcore from Philly with big drum rolls, and one song in Spanish. Four wonderfully pissed-off and bleak songs from each band. —Chris Terry (Neck Chop, neck-chop-records.myshopify.com)

CAREER: *Structures*: LP

Career fills the hole in my heart where Off Minor sometimes lives. This band from Tampa is clearly brimming with folks who know about music, not just its history but its structure. It's interesting to listen to; it's surprising. It's dissonant and surprising and when the vocals do appear, they are exactly what you've come to expect from Florida—gruff, urgent, and strained. You fucking listen to this record; it doesn't play in the background. It's from the same lineage as Palatka but is grown up in a way, proving that there's something about Florida swamps that just grows good hardcore. —Theresa W. (Self-released)

CHOKE CHAINS:

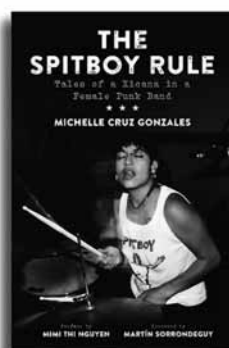
***Android Sex Worker*: LP**

Choke Chains play repetitive, bass-heavy riffs with distorted vocals laid over. The pace ranges from hitting the gas pedal to cruising a Whataburger. "Cairo Scholars" moves at the ideal '90s-in-Chicago speed. I'm going to use some old references here because I'm bit out of touch: this album reminds



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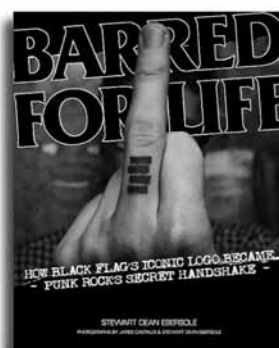
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Barred for Life: How
Black Flag's Iconic Logo
became Punk Rock's
Secret Handshake by
Stewart Dean Ebersole

Old enough to know what we're doing, young enough to know what's at stake. PMPRESS.ORG

me a bit of Jesus Lizard or Lard. The album is well done. There may be more modern bands doing this, but for me this comes from a specific time in the '90s. Either way, if you're getting into that type of stuff, or you're a member of a scene I'm not familiar with, this is a fine album. It's angst-ridden and has a killer bass sound. —Billups Allen (Hound Gawd, houndgawd.com)

CHUNDER BUFFET: *Cesspool: CS*

In the world of DIY band naming, it often seems as if there's nothing new under the sun, which may explain the return to one-word band names that has become so popular lately. Saskatoon's Chunder Buffet defies that trend, choosing to call themselves something both absurd and evocative, gross and fun. The tape delivers cool, driving post-punk with intense feminine vocals set off by shrieks and shouts, at times reminiscent of the Screaming Females, but with stranger, slower, more brooding arrangements. I'll take a plate at the Chunder Buffet any day. —Lyle (Grey)

COLD LEATHER: *Past Remedy: 7"*

Your leather jacket is your pillow, your cigarettes are your breakfast, and Cold Leather is the band you're trying to go see tonight. It's minor chord punk from Berlin. Dark melodies, downtrodden lyrics, sunglasses. For people who are lukewarm on Sheer Mag or Royal Headache and want something rougher. Something without questions or answers. Something that's just trying to exist. —Daryl (Sabotage)

COLOR TV: *Paroxeteens: 7"*

"Paroxeteens" is a certified banger. Power-power-pop. The extra power is because it's really powerful. Super hooky with a relentless, reckless punk energy. It's real shit like this that just cuts through the constant barrage of fodder that chokes up the cultural highways and byways of our community. Refreshing and exciting. Should have probably checked this band out sooner. —Daryl (Neck Chop)

COMBATANT: *Sick Plot: 7"*

Combatant plays hardcore punk. That narrows absolutely nothing down, so I will go a little further and say that they play Americanized British hardcore. My favorite example of this is Poison Idea. While Combatant isn't quite at the Poison Idea level, this record is pretty damn good. Seven relentless tracks for seven vinyl inches. This takes me back to where there was a buffoon celebrity in the White House and the common people had no hope or future, just the constant fear of escalated nuclear aggression... Wait a minute... —Ty Stranglehold (Not Like You)

COMPANY RETREAT: *Self-titled: CD*

Known as Bent Left for their first eight records, Company Retreat offers number nine under a new name. Put short, this record f'ing rules. It's what I want punk rock to be: smart, funny, incisive, while somehow reveling in and laughing at the despair and destruction that dogs our steps. The sound, especially in terms of the

rhythms and vocal harmonies, reminds me a whole lot of the Menzingers sans all the emo and reset at a blistering pace with some tubas and trombones thrown in for good measure. I can't get enough of this. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Encapsulated)

CRONANDER: *Executive Disorder: CDEP*

Cronander has a song that rips off the riff from Circle Jerks' "Live Fast Die Young" and is titled "Cronander." I hate it when bands name songs after their band names. Metal bands used to do that all the time. It comes across as very lazy. And that's emblematic of this four-piece hardcore punk band. Even their album cover looked like something from rejected Megadeth album art. They really didn't catch my interest and their lack of originality didn't help. —Kurt Morris (Self-released, cronander.bandcamp.com)

CRUEL WHIP: *Fatal Man: CS*

Cruel Whip is the work of David Petro of Art Acevedo, and guitarist/vocalist of Xetas. Self-described as "electro-industrial" and "experimental techno," this tape opens up with "Deathwatch," a song that sounds like it is influenced by a roller coaster going up the tracks before it descends down. As the chains on the track clink under your car, the surrounding eerie music sounds like the emotions going through your brain as you prepare yourself for what is to come. It's the anxious feeling of knowing your

stomach is going to drop as soon as you start flying down the other side. As the song develops, the nervous energy in the sounds begin to form patterns, until the song sputters out at the end. The intro to "Consumption" has a chiming frequency sound that reminds me of when you dial a phone number that is no longer in service, and your phone gives you feedback that sounds like your phone call got intercepted by aliens. The frequency goes on through the song, altering its tone, deepening, extending, and gives me creepy vibes, like the eerie feeling of walking into an empty house and feeling that something is off. The end of the song sounds like a call trying to be reconnected, and the intro chiming looping. Title track "Fatal Man" is the only song where you hear someone's voice. This track incites chaos. It reminds me of what it sounded like when dial-up internet was the only thing we had, and you picked up the phone to make a call when someone else was logged online. —Cynthia Pinedo (Self Sabotage, selfsabotagerecords, bigcartel.com)

CRUELTY OF THE HEAVENS:

Grow Up and See: CD

Three-piece band from Memphis that emits a definite '90s vibe. You will be able to pick out influences here and there. One band that immediately springs to mind is Longwave. Not sure if that is intentional or not, but here we are. "Vessel" is pretty

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textured for a power trio. These guys play with conviction, but whether this will float your boat as a Razorcake magazine reader remains to be seen. —Sean Koepenick (Encapsulated, crueltyoftheheavens@gmail.com)

CRUMBS: *Mind Your Manners*: LP

Crumbs are a Leeds-based post-punk quartet. This record looks really cool. It's clear with green splatter and matching geometric neon artwork on the cover. Musically, they remind me a bit of Wimps and Priests but more Sleater-Kinney inspired with a little cowbell for good measure. —Candace Hansen (Everything Sucks Music)

DANA: *Self-titled*: LP

If you were abducted by underwater aliens while swimming in the deep end at a punk pool party, you would likely hear something like DANA. Wailing, Karen O-like vocals and warbly space noises weave through thick, muffled distortion to create what the Columbus, Ohio band calls "avant-garage" or "protopunk." It's definitely creative, and the band's experiments with the wah pedal are impressive, but I find the sound's erratic nature and the indecipherable subject matter to be difficult to grasp. In other words, I don't *get* it. I do, however, like the album cover, which features a demonized, mechanized Wendy of the fast food chain founded in the band's hometown. —Michelle Kirk (Heel Turn, heelturnrecords@gmail.com, heelturnrecords.com)

DANNY BURK AND THE INVADERS: *"Ain't Going Nowhere" b/w "Till I'm Sure": 7"*

In the mid-1960s, Danny Burk And The Invaders helped develop that fuzzy pop-rock sound now being widely revived by artists like Ty Segall and Night Beats. Through the first track's thick haze, low bass tones support upbeat vocals and a simple riff that sticks to your bones. The B-side track features the Memphis gentlemen singing in a well-harmonized, almost barbershop style and surf-y noodling on electric guitar. ARA originally produced the 45; it was recently reissued in limited quantity by Certified PR in Florida. —Michelle Kirk (Certified PR, thickbootyhos@yahoo.com, certifiedprrecords.com)

DARIUS KOSKI:

What Was Once Is By and Gone: CD

Erstwhile Swingin' Utters guitarist Darius Koski goes troubadour, and he does a good job of it. The tunes on this record tend to have a melancholy timbre to them, and frequently they reflect the growing diversity of musical influences that crept into later Utters records. And while the aforementioned melancholy could, theoretically, get dull since there are a jillion records out there like that, what Koski does that I like so much is that his lyrics run a rift of bitterness throughout, completely upending the "sweetness" of the tunes. Much of the mood of this record evokes for me the mood of Norah Jones's "Miriam," which is an absolutely gorgeous song about mercilessly killing someone who

has betrayed you. Of course, I may be over-representing Koski's record, but that's the vibe that I get from it, for good or ill. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Fat)

DAY CREEPER: *A Mirror to the Fire*: LP

Mix of indie and garage rock out of Ohio. The songs are well structured and delivered, and there's this undertow that at times recalls '70s power pop and the mid-'80s sweet spot where indie rock began asserting itself in the midst of punk's hardcore obsession. —Jimmy Alvarado (Superdreamer, superdreamerrecords.com)

DEAD BARS: *Dream Gig*: CS

The CD version of this, released by No Idea, was reviewed by Kayla Greet in *RZC* #101, so I doubt there's much that I can add that hasn't already graced these pages. This was my first exposure to Dead Bars, and I think Kayla hit all the nails square on the head, but I will doff my cap specifically to her noting the "live" feel of this record. I was particularly impressed by the song "Tear Shaped Bruise," a sophisticated rendering of the mosh pit as painful catharsis for heartbreak and irrevocable mistakes. By the way, this cassette release has an alternate "director's cut" version of the LP on the B side that includes bonus material. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Let's Pretend)

DEAD ENDING:

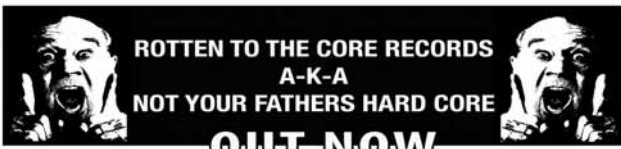
Shoot the Messenger: LP

Another doozy of a release from this juggernaut, dropping in at full throttle

and rarely letting up until it decides you've had enough. Some of the stuff here sonically comes closest to Articles Of Faith as I've heard 'em get, with articulate, intelligent, and fiery thrash blasts giving way to noisy pop-tinged hardcore, all delivered with diamond cutter precision. These cats continue to fire on all cylinders and it's absolute folly not to pay attention now, when they're active and vital, and instead perpetuate the fetishization of a "golden" era that wasn't. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alternative Tentacles)

DELSTROYERS, THE: *Diabolical*: CD

I've been on a bit of an instrumental kick lately. In the last month I've been spinning a lot of John Carpenter and the *Stranger Things* soundtrack. They're fantastic to read to since you'll never get pulled out of your book with a word or phrase that catches your ear. The Delstroyers fall right into this category, but the only problem is they'll make you want to get up and dance too. So maybe this is best to listen to while exercising? Or cleaning the house? It's got all the classic hallmarks of a surf band, yet mixed in is a slightly darker lean. They peek into the world of psychobilly, but just enough to get a taste. I appreciate that they're not just a Dick Dale rip off/wipe out band, but instead bring elements of the world outside the beach to these songs. It's simple and sounds effortless, though each track definitely carries a mood and tone with it. Seriously fantastic background jams to crank throughout



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the year. It doesn't have to be summer or Halloween to appreciate surf! –Kayla Greet (Hell Hop, no address listed)

DES DEMONAS: Self-titled: CD

Psychedelic garage rock from DC. There's definitely some southern, soul, and African influence, but unfortunately I don't hear anything that would make me book a flight to Goner Fest to see them. –Juan Espinosa (In The Red, intheredrecords.com)

DEVILS, THE: Iron Butt: CD

Another album of über-fuzzed out, ultra-distorted garage rock minimalism from this Naples two-piece. Completely bereft of any artsy pretense or nuance, they instead go for the full slam-bang, at times devolving into little more than a wall of static with a backbeat. –Jimmy Alvarado (Voodoo Rhythm)

DIAGNOSIS? BASTARD!:

Silenciado: LP

Stockholm hardcore along the same lines as Victims and the like. Tempos are kept at a nice clip, the intensity meter is in the red, and they maintain the energy throughout. –Jimmy Alvarado (Kink)

DIMBER: damber: 7"

Hi, wow. I love Dimber. Imagine the Descendents produced a riot grrrl band. Riffs are short and solid. Lyrics are razor sharp and poetic, delivered like a call to action by frontwoman and dynamic dresser extraordinaire Caleb. This EP comes with a zine that

ties together the album by representing each song through art and prose, beautifully interwoven with activities, and recommendations for books, music, and health services for women and the LGBTQ community. There is a maze with no solution. There is a quote with a citation. I love everything about this. Thank you for existing. –Candace Hansen (dimber.bandcamp.com)

DOGHOUSE: Never Cry Wolf: CD

Nearly twenty years after forming, Serbia's Doghouse return with their first release since 2015's *Dysfunction* EP. A gleamingly over-polished recording didn't do much to endear me to the band. Other than the vaguely left-leaning political lyrics in their own songs, the most interesting thing on *Never Cry Wolf* was Doghouse's cover of Bruce Springsteen's "I'm on Fire." I can't say I'm into Springsteen, never mind covers of his material, but other than the cover, there wasn't much remarkable about *Never Cry Wolf* to make Doghouse stand out from the crowd. –Paul J. Comeau (Morning Wood)

DRUG VICTIM: Worry: 7"

I've seen this band a couple of times and have always been impressed with its bludgeoning sound, impenetrably crammed into short, effective performances. This six-tracker allows more of the nuances to come through, rather than it being a total ear battering. Primarily, that means the vocals being more discernible and

the guitar's razor-sharp qualities being more notable. This allows the songs to stand out individually and reflects how good Drug Victim actually is. The highlight is "Choices," which opens with a sinister bass then bursts into life with an NYHC-mixed-with-a-bit-of-Minor-Threat feel to it. Worth checking out. –Rich Cocksedge (Don't Care, dontcarerecords.com, dontcarerecords@gmail.com / Rubaiyat, rubaiyatrecords@gmail.com, rubaiyatrecords.bigcartel.com/Hydrogen Man, info@hydrogenmanrecords.com, hydrogenmanrecords.com / Bosleven)

DUMPIES, THE: Billie Jean King: CS

Jangly and trebly Bananas-esque garage pounding with women and men singing. From Austin. Thirteen songs, average length: around one minute. Put the name of the album on your tape next time so I don't have to spend ten minutes sifting through dating advice online ("Dumper or dumpee?") before I find your site. –Chris Terry (Hovercraft, tim@hovercraftpdx.com, hovercraftpdx.com, thedumpsies.bandcamp.com)

DUMPIES, THE: Billie Jean King: CS

Snotty, obnoxious punk rock that forced me to look on the internet to find out the title. That's how you know it's cool. I was ready to file this away as standard-issue trashy garage rock from the first few seconds of skuzzy-sounding guitar noise, but there's a little more to it than that. The Dumpsies carry themselves with the same gleeful party punk

attitude as early Pangea, delivering lines like "My guts are falling out/ My head is falling out" with barely-on-key gusto. The more melodic songs are like a jankier version of that jangly kind of pop punk The Marked Men do. Then there's the weird post-punk dissonance of "Cryptoparty," not to mention "Nauahyde," the shrieking sonic trainwreck of a closer. More than half of the songs clock in under a minute, so all you can really do is try to keep up. –Indiana Laub (Hovercraft, tim@hovercraftpdx.com, hovercraftpdx.com, thedumpsies.bandcamp.com)

DUMPIES, THE: Mark Spitz: CS

Fun, crazed punk, couched somewhere between Regulations, the Spits, and Le Shok, if that makes sense. Meaning it's frantic and veering and tightly compact and held together with equal parts duct tape, adrenaline, and cheap sunglasses. The longest song comes in at an operatic 1:32. If any of these tunes had found their way onto that old *Dirtnap across the Northwest* comp, I wouldn't have batted an eye. –Keith Rosson (Hovercraft, tim@hovercraftpdx.com, hovercraftpdx.com, thedumpsies.bandcamp.com)

DUMPIES, THE: Mark Spitz: CS

Honestly, from this band's name I was expecting something closer to The Queers; something with a more juvenile, '50s-inspired edge. And that's there on some songs like "Slow Bleed" that seem to play with that expectation while staying committed



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to the fast-paced, raw edge of the Jawbreaker or Off With Their Heads influence that runs throughout. This seems about in line with how they see themselves, as "a band booked to play an anarchist's pool party." Combined with the intentional low-fi quality, the melodic cadences carry this thing. The relatively plain packaging undersells how good this little cassette is. Like if the Pixies had a baby with Annalise. —Theresa W. (Hovercraft)

DUZZ: *Flesh Costume: CS*

Olympia's Duzz makes discordant, twisted post-punk that lurches crazily between tempos and chord progressions. For most of the tape I couldn't figure out what I thought Duzz sounds like until I realized they remind me of the Nation Of Ulysses in their use of unusual, funky/jazzy voicings and complicated time signatures. The tape is no less punk for any of that. A genuinely interesting tape amid a sea of formulaic hardcore is a nice surprise. —Lyle (Self-released, duzzmusic.bandcamp.com)

DWARVES: *Julio: 7"*

The Dwarves are back with this, their leadoff single to their brand new album. Four tracks, three of which are on the album. Immediately noticeable is the lack of any nudity on the front cover. Don't be fooled, however, it's just been moved to the back cover (and labels on the record itself). Not much needs to be said other than the Dwarves are the Dwarves and they continue to

write, record, and release Dwarves songs. Fast, tight and ever so catchy. As always, you have to fight the urge to sing along because no matter how well written the songs are, the lyrics are almost always a model of depravity. Let's face it, you already know if this record is for you or if you will hate it. Choose accordingly. —Ty Stranglehold (Riot Style, riotstyle.com)

DWARVES: *Take Back the Night: LP*

Legendary sleaze punks the Dwarves are celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of their first tour with the release of what appears to be their thirteenth album *Dwarves Take Back the Night*. As I've said in the past in these very pages, the magic of the Dwarves is their ability to create well crafted, sonically appealing music and balance it with some of the most repugnant lyrics ever put to wax and somehow make it work. Is there a point where you can go so low-brow that it becomes high art? If so, that's the level that the Dwarves are operating in. This album seems to lean further into their hardcore *Blood, Guts & Pussy* era than other recent albums with the longest song clocking in at 2:15—but fear not, there is that catchiness and Blag's uncanny ability to turn a phrase you would have never thought of all over this record as well. I only have one real complaint about the record, and that is there are too many vocals by Rex Everything (aka Nick Oliveri). His raspy, high pitched screech is everything that Blag's amazing, smooth-like-butter delivery isn't and it instantly

stops being a Dwarves song to my ears when he appears in anything other than back ups. Other than that, this is a welcome addition to the ever-growing discography. The scum continues to rise. —Ty Stranglehold (Burger)

ECHO SPRING: *Self-titled: EP*

During finals last semester, one of my TAs let me in on a secret: He can tell by the end of the first paragraph of a paper whether he'll give it a passing or failing grade. I've been writing about music for a few years now, and I've gotta say that the same rule applies to reviewing; I know whether I'll love or loathe a record within the first twenty or so seconds of the opening song. And after listening to the first few bars of Echo Spring's self-titled EP, I could tell that it would be my favorite new release. Part punk, part hardcore, part emo (think Rites Of Spring), Echo Spring wields tortured, discordant melodies like a weapon. Singer Corey Duran's cacophonous vox are the perfect accompaniment to Fugazi-inspired guitar and the tightest drum and bass section this side of the Mississippi. I'm excited to see where these Denton, Texas, cats go. RECOMMENDED x100,000. —Simone Carter (Sarcophagus Club, sarcophagusclub@gmail.com sarcophagusclub.bigcartel.com)

EIGHT: *Self-titled: 7" EP*

Pop with a heavy '90s shoegaze feel—loud guitars, soft vocals, slower tempos, and hooks so sweet they'd crystallize if

they were cake frosting. So good that there only being four tracks here seems almost criminal. Here's hoping a full-length is on its way. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dead Broke)

ERIK NERVOUS: *Assorted Anxieties: LP*

Again, I have to hand it to Juice Man over at Drunken Sailor for keeping me neck deep in amazing music that I had never heard before. I can't find much info on Erik, but I can tell you that he records some great-sounding basement trash punk. I think he records everything himself and gets a backing band to play with him for shows. I wouldn't be surprised if he was involved with the dudes who do Coneheads and Liquids somehow. The music has the same kind of vibe, but channelled through the U.K. circa '79 or '80. This LP collects all of Erik's early singles and tapes. It is coming out in the U.S. on Neck Chop as well. I am a fan. If the above jumble of words made any sense to you, you'll probably be a fan too. —Ty Stranglehold (Drunken Sailor, drunksailorrecords.bandcamp.com)

FADEAWAYS, THE: *"Sick and Tired" b/w "Long Gone (The Customs)": 7"*

Raucous, snotty punk'n'roll from Japan, The Fadeaways delivers two scorching songs. "Sick and Tired" has bassist/singer Toyozo tearing up his vocal cords from shouting "hey, hey, hey" before busting into the iconic riff from The Kinks' "You Really Got Me." Side B, a cover of The Customs' "Long

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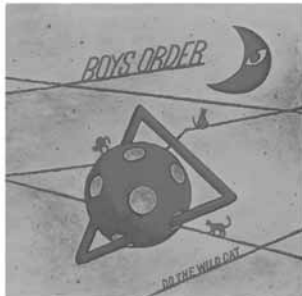


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Gone,” amplifies the original’s attitude and climaxes with an ear-gasmic guitar solo. Although less than five minutes total, this 7” packs more punch than most records by the recent onslaught of trendy “garage” rock bands. Get into it. Never get over it. —Sean Arenas (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

FADEAWAYS, THE: *Razor Dog: 7”*

This new two-song single from Tokyo garage punk legends The Fadeaways is limited to two hundred copies in the U.S. One of the tracks is a cover of “Long Gone” by The Customs, and it’s a rollicking version if ever there was one. The Fadeaways are one of the more dependable, consistent 1960s-inspired punk bands of today, but they’re still not as well-known stateside as they should be. Kudos to Secret Mission for churning out so many killer releases. —Art Ettinger (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

FAIM: Demo: CS

Competent hardcore from Denver. There are some interesting changes and the vocals have some interesting “proto hardcore” tendencies, but this is mostly meat-and-potatoes hardcore with some heavier parts thrown in for good measure. —Ian Wise (To Live A Lie)

FATAL FIGURES: *You Are Monster: LP*

Mix of garage and noise rock that manages not to be too noisy or too garagey. Using a cover of Red Cross’ “Burnout” as a starting point, they slink

and stomp through a bevy of songs that, at times, sound like an unholy union between The Flesh Eaters and Chrome Cranks. —Jimmy Alvarado (Blak Skul, facebook.com/blakskulrecords)

FCON: Self-titled: LP

Straight-up tough hardcore punk. There are songs about jocks, cops, bosses, the prison system, religion, drug and alcohol use, violence against women, and old punks. The lyrics are pretty simple and cut to the point quickly. What I also like is that the vocal delivery is clean and incredibly describable. For the most part, I could understand every screamed word without having to reference the lyric sheet. It’s angry street punk meets angry hardcore, so they all have plenty to be pissed about. Each song is rapid fire with a pummeling of drums, sludgy-heavy guitar with the occasional solo, and deep, scowling vocals. I’m with them on all counts (fuck violence against people of color, fuck cops, fuck soul-crushing jobs), besides the ageism track, “Mr. Punk Rock.” It’s the only song that changes their style and slows down to a ska beat with lots of upstrokes and a small bit of vocal distortion. Maybe it’s because these guys are still in their mid-to-late twenties, but I’m not into lyrics like “Pack it up, time to quit / your legacy doesn’t mean shit,” and talking about how they’ve seen the world but still hit on sixteen year old girls. I’d imagine they mean one person in particular, but don’t forget that old punks can give

you perspective. Just as long as they haven’t gotten married, had babies, and quit the scene! These guys in FCON have a very clear line on where they stand on issues, and deliver it with aggression and passion. —Kayla Greet (Tiny Dragon Music)

FINISTERRE: Self-titled: LP

Darkcore, is that a genre yet? That’s where I would file this record. It’s crusty, d-beat hardcore but with more tempo changes. The album starts off with a track called “Never Stop Your Anger,” and that seems to be the theme throughout the record: anger. Standouts on the record are “Hungry Heart” and “Fibre.” These tracks almost have a catchy post-punk feel to them. Also, it’s worth mentioning that this record has great cover artwork. —Ryan Nichols (Contrast, info@diyordie.net)

FLESH MOTHER: *Nourishment: CD*

Sludgy stoner doom-death for punks with short attention spans? A gateway drug for hardcore kids who’d dig the filthy metal shit if the songs weren’t so goddamn long and boring? Your meal has arrived. Flesh Mother has served up a platter of short, heavy, and dirty jams: seven songs in seventeen minutes. With lyrics and vocals that would be right at home on either a crust or sludge record—on songs like “Disgusting Creatures” and “Sick World/Sick Shit”—this is satisfying nourishment for anyone with an appetite for sludge. —Chad Williams (Self-released, fleshmother.bandcamp.com)

FOX FACE: *Spoil + Destroy: LP*

Garage feel with straight-up punk attitude... and yet none of it is exactly straight ahead. The righteous lyrical anger is often counterbalanced by the music itself, which has echoes of surf, pop, riot grrrl, hardcore, and dirge veined throughout. Good stuff. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dirtnap)

FRED SCHNEIDER & THE SUPERIONS: *The Vertical Mind: CD*

It looks as if The Superions decided to rebrand as “Fred Schneider & The...” which may have been a shrewd move, as someone as vocally unique and as visually identifiable as Fred probably deserved to be called out. That said, I wasn’t sure what to expect from this disk as it’s been quite a while since Schneider has been on my radar, if I am being honest. The verdict? I’m pleasantly surprised. While the Superions clearly aren’t your mom’s B-52’s, Schneider is all over this with his very distinct vocal style as well as his patented, kitschy lyrics. Musically, this probably rides the line between disco and electronic dance music with a touch of ‘70s funk and soul. I’d venture to say if you are over the age of forty, this CD would be a damn fine addition to your party mix. That certainly isn’t a knock on the band but rather speaks to Fred’s aging fan base. As with the aforementioned B-52’s, a little bit can go a long way—but you know what?—I’m probably splitting hairs here and maybe some silly, hedonistic

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fun is exactly what we all need these days. —Garrett Barnwell (HHBTM, hbbtm.com)

FRED SCHNEIDER & THE SUPERIONS: *The Vertical Mind*: CD

The B-52's longtime (mostly) lead vocalist steps out with a new band. The sound here is largely dancey synthpop coupled with Schneider's odd, irreverent lyrics, as evidenced by titles like "Stampede at the Petting Zoo," and "(Underpants) In the Rain." Nothing here reaches the lofty brilliance of, say, "Strobe Light," but it's not without its charms. —Jimmy Alvarado (HHBTM, hbbtm.com)

G.B.H.: *Momentum*: LP/CD

As a teenager, G.B.H. was a band that really struck a chord with me and that attraction has remained steadfast for three and a half decades. Recent releases have been good but none of them came close to touching my love of those early releases from the 1980s. That is until now. *Momentum* kicks all kinds of ass, with Colin Abrahall's voice sounding as glorious as ever, Jock Blyth's guitar tearing chords to shreds, whilst the rhythm section of Ross Lomas and Scott Preece reverberates menacingly, only occasionally veering from a rock solid up-tempo drive. "Birmingham Smiles" is a great homage to the band's hometown and turns out to be the start of my favorite G.B.H. album in many years. *Momentum* is a record that sits nicely alongside those earlier

releases from these Brummie punks. —Rich Cocksedge (Hellcat)

GEE TEE: *Death Race*: 7"

This single is bringing back some seriously fond memories of the early sounds by the A Frames. Not quite as blown out and seeming to take more from Devo than the Screamers, the vibe is nonetheless similar. Fuzzy and trippy synth punk, or maybe organ punk is the sound here and it is quite well done. —Mike Frame (Neck Chop)

GEROS, THE: *Razor Dog*: 7"

Osaka trash melded perfectly with Detroit gutter and L.A. chaos. This has all the earmarks of a long-lost classic, but no; it's of this era. Fans of "Dead Boys as interpreted by Teengenerate" stylings will find much to appreciate here. According to the insert, only five hundred made, of which only two hundred are available in the U.S. so ye might wanna start scrounging quick-like. —Jimmy Alvarado (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

GRAVE RETURN: *We Have to Know*: LP

Bit of an odd, but amazing, duck here—modern band hailing from Florida, but they have a deeeep early '80s Orange County undertow to their songs, and there's also some mid-'80s Midwestern pop experimentation lurking underneath as well. At times, things sound like a perfect distillation of early Descendents and more recent Adolescents endeavors... and then some Hüsker guitar noodling pops up,

or Replacements drive kicks things into overdrive. Strangely, none of it sounds dated or rehashed, and the band clearly has a sound all its own. Rock solid throughout with well-constructed tunes, spot-on delivery, and punchy production. —Jimmy Alvarado (Grave Return)

GUERRILLA POUBELLE: *La Nausée*: CD

The fourth album from this long-running Paris political punk band. Guerilla Poubelle started in 2003 and play in the gritty and melodic style of that era—think *whoah-ohs* and gruff vocals: Strike Anywhere or Hot Water Music. I get the sense that there's something righteous and intelligent going on here, and was psyched to see that dyingscene.com translated one of their song titles as, "The Sons and Daughters of the Witches You Didn't Burn." —Chris Terry (Red Scare, redscare.net)

GUITAR GANGSTERS:

***Sex and Money*: LP**

I've liked this lot since I first heard them on one Link Records criminally underrated *Underground Rockers* compilation LPs. I haven't heard any new stuff for years, but to be honest it's still forged in the same mold as near on thirty years ago. The drum stool revolves but the mainstay of the two Ley brothers has remained a constant. This could almost be called "sugar oi," a coin termed back in the dark ages for more melodic skinhead music. Falling somewhere between a pop-edged Cock

Sparrer, Sham 69, Eddie And The Hotrods, and a smattering of late-'80s bands like the Mega City Four. With smart songwriting and hooks, this is a great LP even for a cynical fucker like me (could do without the Paul Simon cover though). —Tim Brooks (Wanda, mailorder.wandarecords.de)

HAND & LEG: *Self-titled*: LP

First song rides along on a simple back beat, repetitive vocals, and one note strummed on a fuzzed-out bass. Song number two adds a note. The bass lines get a bit more complex on subsequent tunes but the whole stays pretty much to the über-simple, arty, almost dirge-like formula throughout, sorta like Flipper without Falconi's noisy guitar and song lengths more suited for the impatient. —Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

HEAT: *Self-titled*: 7" EP

Short attention span hardcore from San Diego. Music alternately seethes, growls, and blasts into potent thrash while the singer follows likewise. At six tunes in five-and-a-half minutes, it's clear they ain't wasting time getting their point across. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

HIS ELECTRO BLUE VOICE:

***Mental Hoop*: LP**

Sinister Italian punk galvanized by the demented brilliance of My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult. The lack of chord progression in the driving guitar/drum parts is redeemed by the

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layers upon layers of additional guitar witchery and inhuman shrieks and sounds. Each song in its own right is a different trip into worlds of paranoia, hatred, and bliss. If this record were a drug it would probably kill you: use as directed. —Juan Espinosa (Iron Lung)

HOWLING WOLVES: Self-titled: LP

Howling Wolves are next up in the long line of rock bands whose devotion to Black Sabbath is rivaled only by their reverence for Black Flag. From Bl'ast! to Annihilation Time to the Shrine, the lineage is strong. These Germans lean more toward Iommi than Ginn, but definitely more Dez than Ozz. Despite the album cover's striking resemblance to Thin Lizzy's *Night Life* (an homage, one hopes), dual guitar leads aren't what this rock record's about—this is power chord riff-rock with a heavy, old school hardcore punk attitude. —Chad Williams (JanML, janml-records.de / Maja Von Lobeck)

HUMMINGBIRD OF DEATH: *Forbidden Techniques*: LP

Since 2005, Hummingbird Of Death, a godlike trio from Boise, Idaho, has been unleashing face-melting fastcore on an unsuspecting world; *Forbidden Techniques* is no exception. As a longtime fan, I didn't even realize how badly I wanted twenty-four blistering songs of superhuman blast beats, (forked) tongue-in-cheek lyrics, and finger-shredding guitar riffs. Less than twenty-five minutes later, side B crashes to a halt and my brain and

body are jelly, as if I just finished a mile sprint. Whenever I want to get my heart rate up, I now know exactly which record to put on. Also, to highlight their lyrical genius, here's a choice line: "Eating fire, shitting lead / Push up daises, now you're dead." Shakespeare couldn't have said it better. —Sean Arenas (To Live A Lie, tolivealie.com)

HÜSKER DÜ:

Savage Young Dü: 4 x LP Box Set

How to tackle something so vast? I guess we'll stick to the facts. Numero has painstakingly unearthed and refurbished a massive amount of early demo and live material from the legendary Minneapolis band. So many songs I had never heard, and it all sounds so great. I always believed that they began as a lightning fast hardcore band and developed their melodic tendencies along the way, but now I know that in the beginning they had an amazing '70s poppy punk sound that reminded me of Vancouver bands such as Pointed Sticks, The Young Canadians, or even The Subhumans a bit. I really love how you can listen to their transformation through the records in this collection. It isn't all demo and live stuff, though. The set also includes their early singles as well as the *Land Speed Record* and *Everything Falls Apart* albums. Interestingly, this is a never-heard version of *Land Speed Record*, as the original tapes of the live shows that album was recorded at have been lost to the sands of time. They did, however, find a recording of a show on

the same tour, with extra songs even. It sounds great! It all does. The box also came with a massive hardcover book full of photos and stories and details on all of the recordings. It is a true historical document. I am so thankful for this and I hope the band and Numero make headway in freeing the rest of their catalog from the claws of SST so they can keep the magic coming! —Ty Stranglehold (Numero, numerogroup.com)

ILLICITOR: Self-titled: CD

Wow. Besides having some of the craziest CD packaging I've ever seen, Las Vegas's Illicitor sounds incredibly full for a three-piece. And on a majority of songs here, they also sound a lot like Glass And Ashes—the same yowls and steamroller-esque, post-punk frenzy and pummeling wall of noise. Can't believe that this band rose, at least somewhat, from the ashes of Holding Onto Sound. You'll find elements of screamo, post-punk, and metal all vying for the top of the scrap heap, and regardless of who's winning, it's a solid, bone-jarring, convincing mess. —Keith Rosson (GC)

KNOWSO: *Look at the Chart: 12"*

The revelation that this band was from Cleveland should have come as no surprise, as their sound is the perfect progression of Ohio underground music. There are no direct lines drawn here and no cheap throwback riffs, but the awkward and somewhat naïve garage sound calls to mind

the Drome/Clone Records bands of Cleveland lore and fuses it somehow seamlessly with mechanical Devo-ish rhythms. This record doesn't sit well on first listen, but that's not always a bad thing, as repeated listens give way to new experiences. Lumpy And The Dumpers/Coneheads/modern outsider punk aficionados will gravitate to this record, and it's a quick listen (five songs on one side of a 12"). —Ian Wise (Neck Chop)

L.A.M.F.:

Live at the Bowery Electric: CD

This reminds me of those moments at music award ceremonies where some legendary performers take the stage in what promises to be an epic moment in music history, only for it to fizzle and sputter out. This is no different. Everyone on this are from bands we all love and think the world of, but this has none of what makes them the exceptional musicians they are. Walter Lure from the Heartbreakers recruited Tommy Stinson, Cheetah Chrome, Wayne Kramer, Clem Burke, and a few others to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the release of *L.A.M.F.*, and you would expect them to pull it off with aplomb. But this just sounds tepid and dialed in. No energy, no fire, and no attitude. —Matt Average (Jungle, jungle-records.net)

LA TUYA: Self-titled: CD

The three members of La Tuya all have strong links with the various L.A. punk scenes, and should be considered as

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punk veterans given their respective lengths of service in and around the world of punk. Such backgrounds mean that they have all the nous and understanding of what makes great music and they use that to good effect on this debut release. I had no idea of what to expect, but the first track, "Salvation," was all I needed to hear to know that I was going to get along with La Tuya. Songs range from thrashy punk through to the more tuneful tracks—all of which work extremely well—but it is the highly melodic "Tribes" which gets me tingling all over. Not only is this the lengthiest track but it's so bright and effervescent, containing hints of Descendents and The Last, that it's jammed fast in my head now, unlikely to relinquish its spot for some time. This might not be the easiest CD to track down, as it's a limited run, but I urge anyone with a love of L.A./So Cal punk to make the effort to do so. This is one of the best albums I've heard in a while. —Rich Cocksedge (Self-released, facebook.com/latuyaeastlos)

LARS FINBERG:

Moonlight over Bakersfield: CD

Moonlight over Bakersfield is the debut solo release from A-Frames, Oh Sees, and The Intelligence et al. contributor and West Coaster Lars Finberg. Shouldn't be much of a surprise to those familiar with his bands that this release ended up on one of the world's greatest record labels, In The Red. Nor does it need to mention that this

album was recorded by a bona fide rock star that goes by the name Ty. Given the aforementioned criteria, it isn't difficult to imagine what this album sounds like, or so I thought. While it obviously has a couple of tunes that remind you of modern California garage crud, *Moonlight Over Bakersfield* is a dynamic and expectation-defying (yet cohesive) album, without jolting you off your seat. It's filled with a wide range of angular and atonal indie rock/garage, hooks, and folk leanings. It's an incredibly deep, excellent debut. It should also be mentioned that I busted out laughing after hearing a full-on direct Metallica lyric/quote from "Harvester of Sorrow" on a certain track. Well played. —Steve Adamyk (In The Red, intheredrecords.com)

LARS FREDRIKSEN AND THE BASTARDS: **Live and Loud!!: LP**

A 2001 live set—which means songs from the first solo album of the Rancid front man—rife with stage banter, machismo, and sound quality that improves as the record progresses. I'll try to avoid editorializing too much about how on his second solo record, Lars would write and record "Mainlining Murder"—a song about beating and murdering a woman and rolling her body parts up in a shower curtain—and will instead note that this live LP contains perhaps the worst shit-talking hot take about the anti-war movement of the Vietnam era I've ever heard, which is saying

something. I mean, hell, you already know if you want this or not. —Keith Rosson (Pirates Press)

LAST GANG, THE: **Sing for Your Supper: 7"**

Leave it to Fat to consistently sign bands that aren't simply from California, but sincerely look like they're from traditional, punk rock California. Nail on the head—literally, no misinterpretation—ever. And hey, at least they're keeping it close to home. The Last Gang is no exception to the rule; thoroughly in style, sound, and consistency. Both tunes on this single do not fall far from the tree, and is it always nice to see a three-piece (!) in this day and age. As much as I hate to play this card, these tracks are very reminiscent of The Distillers or Bay Area-style, faced-paced, standard punk. This rips just as hard as every comparable release by contemporary artists of the same ilk. The Last Gang pull it off. Fat fans won't be disappointed. —Steve Adamyk (Fat, fatwreck.com)

LAUGHING STOCK: **Rough Crowd: 7"**

This has the '80s just oozin' off of it. Echoes of early T.S.O.L., Mystic Records, Wimpy Dicks, Florida skate rats No Fraud, and assorted others pop into the noggin as the short tunes on this roll through. Not an easy style to pull off, they do a bang-up job of pulling it off without sounding like a museum tribute. —Jimmy Alvarado (Not Like You)

LEMURIA: **Recreational Hate: LP/CD**

Listening to a new Lemuria album is one of my favorite musical experiences. I know how the band play and sound but it's not possible to second guess what I'll hear on the first run through of any release. The album opens with the subtle "Timber Together"—primarily a vehicle for Sheena Ozzella's vocals and guitar with a subdued bass in support—is a beautifully low-key beginning. The more standard upbeat indie pop sound is restored with "Sliver of Change" and "Christine," the latter a reworking of the track featured on the *Turnstyle Comix* #3 EP. These two tracks reflect the essence of what makes Lemuria such a great band as the vocals of Ozzella and drummer Alex Kearns deliver some gorgeous melodies, be it as a pair or on their own. Whilst Max Gregor lets his bass weave magic throughout, Kearns' drumming is sublime. He creates more than just a beat to keep things in line, adding so much depth to the compositions. However, nothing beats Ozzella's guitar playing which is warm and spiky with enough of a discordant edge to add a counterpoint to the melodicism. There are no downsides here and *Recreational Hate* does seem to be packing a more rounded, fuller sound with a more varied musical oeuvre than previous albums. The biggest surprise is the heavy country influence on "I Wanted to Be Yours," right down to the inclusion of a pedal steel guitar, which helps create a truly beautiful song. Lemuria rules. —Rich Cocksedge (Big Scary Monsters / Asian Man)



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LIVING EYES, THE: *Modern Living*: LP

The Living Eyes hail from Geelong, Victoria, Australia. I'd never heard of Geelong and I've never been to Australia. However, judging by the pictures Google's image search has to offer, it looks a bit like Southern California—San Diego without the hills—and that allows their sound to make perfect sense to me. Within the first thirty seconds of the opening track, "Better Think Again," it's clear that this is a band that likes to have fun. (I promise I thought this before I got to track three, "Party Theme," which definitely lives up to its name.) While The Living Eyes rest pretty firmly in the fuzzed-out punk space, there's enough experimentation here—some good solos, talent for playing with tempo, a hint of The Talking Heads—to listen through thoughtfully at least once. After that, it's up to any individual to take it or leave it. I'll say it's a solid pick for your arsenal of bands to consider when you're building a playlist for your next party—be it rowdy or a low-key backyard gathering. —Nicole X (Neck Chop)

LIVING LOUDER: *Self-titled*: CD

This is what happens if Southern rock meets Black Sabbath. The vocals are especially reminiscent of Ozzy. They're not as strong, but still well done. The music has a good groove and some muscle when it's required, but seems pretty standard for the genre. I was also reminded of some of the Christian hard rock bands I used to listen to in

the early '90s and that was weird for me. That's not to say that any of the lyrics are the same, just the sound. This caused me to have split feelings with Living Louder: I have a few good memories from my days of listening to Christian hard rock, but some of that stuff really sucked. It's not surprising I feel the same way about these guys: there's some good stuff but some of it is kind of sucky. Still, I lean more to the good side of things for the course of these ten songs. —Kurt Morris (Self-released, livinglouderofficial.com)

LONGCLAW: *Patterns*: 12" EP

I listen to this record once a week and not just because I am super into the moniker of "crycore," which is how the band describes itself. They may truly be Portland's saddest band (and that's saying something). It's great post-hardcore, made especially tense and lifting by the double vocals on most songs, sometimes used in a call and response style. I want to listen to this the same way I listen to Elliott, driving through some nowhere town with all the windows down and wallowing in my own sense that being sad is maybe the natural state of being human. But then! There are also songs like "Shorter Cliffs" that are so pressing and tight that they are totally meant to be your earbud soundtrack to a rainy city. Bonus points for the excellent galaxy themes to the beautiful artwork—the music is totally this ethereal. This is what all those people who keep making emo playlists on Spotify that consist

solely of Fall Out Boy, Reliant K, and Hawthorne Heights should listen to in order to get themselves right on where emo was supposed to go post-2000. —Theresa W. (Self-released)

LOST WORLD: *Posthumanism*: 7"

Lost World was a German anarcho punk band active in the late nineties. This record features a few unreleased tracks of theirs along with tracks that originally appeared on compilations, making it something of a collector's item. It certainly is a relic of its time, containing a poster proclaiming that "capitalism is the crisis" and an insert containing lyrics in German, Italian, and English. They sound like a '90s political hardcore band, with harsh, pissed-off, crusty tracks set off by screamed vocals declaiming various false gods. Pretty cool. —Lyle (Kink, kink-records.de)

LOWLIFE: *Leaders*: 7" EP

HoZac reissues Winnipeg's first punk record, circumventing the bootleggers and causing the whole rare-punk investment market to collapse. Originally released on Airout Records in 1979, this features three tracks of infectious punk rock that has the immediacy and smartass sensibility of the best of Dangerhouse's oeuvre delivered with the primitive stomp that made the Viletones' best tunes so fuggin' swell. Limited to five hundred copies, so interested parties might wanna hurry before they go the way of the original pressing. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac)

MANHATTAN MURDER MYSTERY:

Dumb: CD

I was pre-writing this review in my head during the first song ("imagine some Beck-damaged twits trying to recreate the Rolling Stones' *Beggars Banquet* album armed with only the slow songs and the back cover font" was my rough draft) and had little ambition to listen to more than a song or two—but by the time I got to "Too Tough to Survive"—which sounds about as close to that Gen X album as this ornate and polished crew is ever gonna get—I came to the realization that this album is a *masterpiece of fucking despair*. "And, in the end, most of your questions won't be answered / You'll just wind up with cancer"—I mean, who the fuck writes things like that, let alone polishes them to a sheen with lush instrumentation? These aren't nihilistic teenagers chugging cough syrup in a basement, these are (seemingly) grown adults, creating an elaborately polished product that features song titles like "I Got a Sadness I Can't Kick" and "Everyone Is Terrible and the World Is Rotten." Although I rather hope I never find myself so bummed out that this album means a lot to me, I wouldn't think of giving it a bad review, just because I'm imagining the singer is standing on a chair right now with a belt around his neck, waiting for the *Razorcake* review to come in so he can decide whether to stay or go. Oh well, have a nice day! BEST SONG & TITLE: "Too Tough to Survive"



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FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: If I spelled "rhythm" with only one "h" I guess I'd be bummed out, too. —Rev. Norb (Miedlena, manhattanmurdermystery.com)

MARTIN: Slaughter Beach: LP

This record's sleeve is actually just an old *Arab Spring* cover turned inside out and hand screen printed on, which is pretty cool in my book. First time I ever saw that done was with RVIVR's Self-titled LP and I was equally impressed with the resourcefulness and ingenuity. One more thing about the packaging—the lyric sheet gave me a great laugh as I read through titles like "Mind of an Asshole" and "Inside Alone," realizing pretty fast that they were all Green Day lyrics. That's an amazing canary in the coalmine. For whatever reason, the other side is a handwritten list of movie titles with tally marks. Oh, and the music you ask? Well that's pretty good stuff too. Some of the transitions are a bit jarring and go from a solemn piano ballad to pop punk to '90s street punk to hardcore. It's as if they put a bunch of genres in a hat and drew lots to see what would make it on the record. This record apparently was recorded in 2012 but not released till 2017 and the band itself seems to be an enigma. Featuring Pat from Spraynard, there are plentiful and lovely melodies parading throughout the album. Yet they do still venture off the worn pop punk path too. It's limited to three hundred copies. Pick one up if you're partial to Spraynard or pretty tunes, not

that the two are mutually exclusive. —Kayla Greet (Square Of Opposition, squareofopposition.com, square_of_opposition@hotmail.com)

MARXBROS / TRAVOLTA: Split: LP

Thirty fastcore/powerviolence songs in eighteen minutes! Marxbros' side of this split contains some intensely noisy sounds that are more vaguely recognizable as songs than Travolta's side. But still, too much, too fast. Dad, out. —Chad Williams (Loner Cult, @lonercultrecords / To Live A Lie, tolivealie.com)

MDC: Mein Trumpf: CD

Just in case you were too busy trying to keep up with the Kardashians to notice, a talking, tweeting, toupee- and tie-wearing, 239 lb. skin tag has sprouted up from the flab of American politics and has seized control of the white house. This giant, bloated orange skin tag crudely apes human behaviors and even shits used McDonald's into gold-plated toilets. And this neoliberal plutocratic monstrosity now looms over everything—including Kim's Selfie Kingdom—as the Most Dangerous Idiot to ever stomp on Terra Firma. Make no mistake: this ultimate putz with a childishly confused idea of wealth is a laughing stock that cannot be ignored. That much is not fake news. Thankfully, we have crusty punk dermatologists like MDC's Dave Dictor who travel our "great again" country with a medicine show featuring all sorts of crude but

effective skin tag removal tonics. *Mein Trumpf* is MDC's first full length since *Magnus Dominus Corpius* some thirteen years ago and it presents a hardcore sound with a distinctly metal edge that, at first, made me wonder if I had put on the Crumbsuckers or Gardy Loo by mistake. I guess the trashy three-chord rashy-armpit hardcore of the Millions Of Dead Cops was still stuck in my head. The sound may now be a hardcore-metal hybrid, but the truculent, not-going-to-take-it-anymore attitude is still classic sneering, jeering Dictor, as angrily loquacious as ever. The highlight for me is the instantly classic repurposing of their anthemic "Born to Die" from those aforementioned rashy-armpit days of the band, the main chorus of which has now been revamped to "No Trump, No KKK, No fascist USA." No question, that song was born to mutate to this crucially topical update, with fangs fully intact. Maybe I'm naïve, but I do still think pissed-off political hardcore like this can make a difference, even at this late date. Punk don't fail me now. —Aphid Peewit (Primordial, primordialrecords, bigcartel.com)

MEH: Firsts: CS

Six songs of charming lo-fi pop stuff. Reminds me of K Records, Mecca Normal, Guided By Voices, Beat Happening, Cub. If you're a fan of the genre, Meh's got their head screwed on right; they're good at it. —Keith Rosson (Reflective)

MIDNIGHT VEIN, THE: Self-titled: CS

Pretty cool acoustic-type stuff not in the usual folk-punk vein, but rather more of a shimmering, Love and Rockets one. All this from one of the dudes in Radiation Risks. I'd play this time and time again if it weren't for me only having one cassette player that is located in my garage. —Garrett Barnwell (Self-released, no address listed)

MIND SPIDERS: Furies: LP

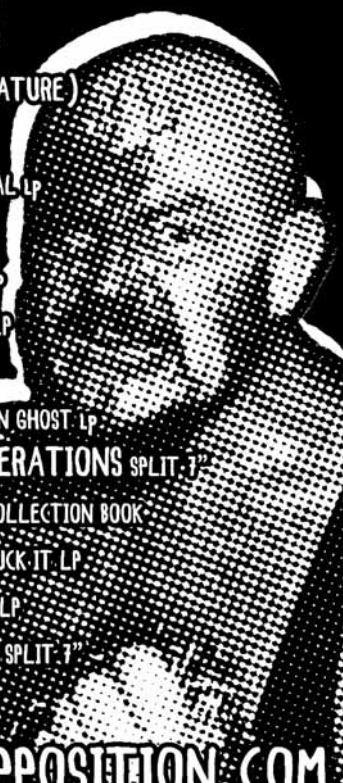
It is always a good day when a new Mind Spiders album arrives. You always think you know what to expect, but they constantly deliver a slightly new evolution that you didn't see coming but embrace instantly. *Furies* finds Mind Spiders at their most synth, which is due to, in no small part, their rhythm section. The combination of programming the bass lines and the blending of electronic drums with live hardware makes the album more cybernetic than previous outings. I am sure the label of "synth punk" has been banded around many times in the past, but this record is the first time that it may truly apply. The songs are raw and in your face yet beautiful and bleak. Precise aggression. In five albums, Mind Spiders have gone from contacting earth, to studying its behaviors, to assimilating us, to recreating us in their own image. *Furies* is the vision of their new, post human home world. We are all Mind Spiders. —Ty Stranglehold (Dirtnap)

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MIND SPIDERS: *Furies*: LP

This record feels like a movie. You can't listen to it without creating some kind of narrative in your head. The pacing, the texture, the conflict. It's like driving through a city really fast at night. Full of action, and set to destroy. It's heavy, gritty, synth, subterranean secret punk. It feels like it's being made on illegal instruments. Evading the totalitarian forces that are clamping down on the new wave of criminal artists and musicians. *Furies* is the soundtrack to the sci-fi becoming the reality. Motivation through fear and anger. The illusions have dissolved, you are the lead character. What are you going to do? This is an absolutely crucial record. —Daryl (Dirtnap)

MIXED SIGNALS: *Self-titled*: CS

I'm a sucker for a catchy song paired with a gravely, heartfelt vocal. Mixed Signals has the goods. My question is this: Is this style a predominantly Southern U.S. phenomena? Most bands that come to my mind come from San Diego, Florida, Texas... and now Tennessee. I don't know. What really matters is that this is great, and I feel like it's going to be in my stereo and in my head for quite some time. —Ty Stranglehold (Lifer Tapes)

MOD VIGIL: *Mod Vigil*: LP/CD

Music need not be complicated or over thought for it to be effective and entertaining. Mod Vigil's debut album is a prime example of this, having been recorded using four tracks in a bedroom.

The resulting lo-fi, thrashy cacophony is perfect, with a frenetic garage punk outcome that is so enthralling that it only took me hearing one song before I ordered this direct from the Melbourne-based trio. The Mod Vigil experience is a pulsating one, providing a magnificent ear bashing. This is great. —Rich Cocksedge (X-Mist, x-mist@x-mist.de, x-mist.de / Off The Hip)

MONSIEURS, THE: *Deux*: LP

This album utilizes overdriven vocals and the trash guitar hard strum to create some medium-speed-driven punk 'n' roll with high energy dividends. The band's high level of rock sensibility keeps the album from crashing into the "valley of every song sounds the same," containing the carcasses of bands who stick to the distortion + speed = always good. They do a lot with a few chords and anarchic back-ups. "Suburban Girls" has a decisively Saturday night chorus edging into power pop sweetness. "Get Right, Get Ready" has a happy chant. I really love the anarchy of the impressionistic cover of Danny And The Juniors' "At the Hop." It's definitely going on my favorite covers list. This album moves freely at a Memphis pace and distortion level. —Billups Allen (Slovenly)

MONSTER TREASURE: *II*: CD

My Bloody Valentine-influenced, blissed-out, sun-kissed power pop punk rock mixed with the fuzzy distortion of Nirvana, topped off with strong, lush female lead and backing vocals.

I review so much stuff that leaves me saying, "Meh." But Monster Treasure's ten songs caught my ear from the first listen. This deserved a second listen. And third. And fourth.... —Kurt Morris (Leisure & District, leisureanddistrict.co.uk)

MUTANT VIDEO: *Vanity of Life*: LP

Dissonant, synth-driven dirges that recall the early days of Coil, Factiva, and Minimal Man. While they never quite reach the levels of sonic virulence those early pioneers unleashed, this is still by no means "easy" music for those looking for the next Nine Inch Nails. Unpleasant, devoid of pop sensibilities, and challenging, as this type of music should be. —Jimmy Alvarado (Iron Lung)

NAKAM: *Self-titled*: 7" EP

Mid-tempo German hardcore that largely relies more on sheer muscle than speed. Things start off with a bit of a "rock" feel to the opening tune's intro, but from there the music's primal and visceral—stomping its point into the ground—before going full-thrash for the last two tunes. —Jimmy Alvarado (Kink)

NEIGHBORHOOD BRATS:***Night Shift*: 7"**

Completely unexpected and fully welcomed, this record comes at us at a time when we need the Neighborhood Brats more than anything. It looked as if they had called it quits seemingly at their peak not long after the release of

their 2014 album *Recovery*, but they're back with this three-song blaster that shows us they aren't quite done yet. The record shows an uncanny ability to combine the scrappy, free for all sound of their earliest recordings with the laser-focused song writing on *Recovery*. There is a something special when Jenny and George get together to make music that you just don't hear every day. With tours booked on the heels of this record, let's hope there is a new LP in the works. If the last few years have proven anything, it's that the world is a better place with Neighborhood Brats in it. Don't sleep on this record. —Ty Stranglehold (Taken By Surprise)

NIGHT PEOPLE: *Self-titled*: 7" EP

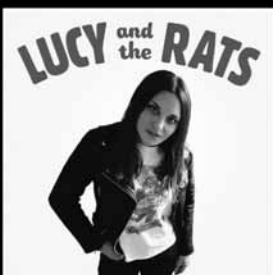
These Vancouver kids turn in four slices of dark, edgy punk-wave that give ample room for synth and guitar alike. The songs may be catchy and almost danceable in places, and the singer may have hints of Jello Biafra at his most accessible, but all is delivered with a bit that maybe recalls a less monolithic D1 in spots. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

PAGANS / HIP PRIESTS, THE: *Split*: 7"

The Pagans, one of the legendary Cleveland bands of the 1970s, were quietly one of the most influential punk acts of all time. Founding member Mike Hudson died tragically of sepsis in the week of Halloween in 2017, in the year that marked the fortieth anniversary of The Pagans. Their track here, "Bad Bet," is an imperturbable attempt to



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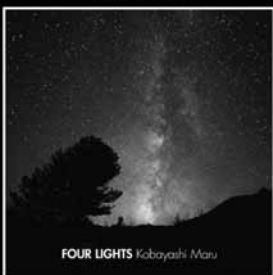
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recapture their definitively '77 sound in the current millennium. The Hip Priests are one of countless groups that would never have existed but for The Pagans. Their track is a terrific tribute to the sound that made The Pagans famous, serving as a worthy tribute to a deceased legend. —Art Ettinger (Just 4 Fun, j4f.dk)

PATH OF MIGHT:

Hallowed Gate Style: CD

Woah. Heavy. In the line of Iron Lung, but then they'll throw in a really melodic breakdown à la Metallica and Black Sabbath. I assumed they were a Japanese band. Their cover has Japanese writing with Asian-influenced art on the front and back cover, an album awkwardly titled *Hallowed Gate Style*, songs like "Tea and Oranges" and "Chapels to the West," and have a koto-like meditative ballad at the end of "Locust Fuge," but—low and behold—they're from St. Louis... go figure. Not sure what that angle means stylistically—fetish/appropriation or none of the above. Their music is both lead-heavy yet honeyed at the same time. Not a bad listen. —Camylle Reynolds (Encapsulated, encapsulatedrecords.com)

PATRICK CAMPBELL-LYONS:

"Out on the Road" b/w "1974": 7"

Is this real? I have not run into this kind of release ever coming my way in my several years of review cycles. Mr. Campbell-Lyons is an Irish-born minstrel and founding member of

English "cult psych" band Nirvana from the late '60s. This single consists of two tracks from his latest LP, *Me and My Friend*, and delivers something between the Grateful Dead's keep-on-trucking swing, sans wandering guitar noodling, and the *Hair* soundtrack's less potent tracks. Think the unrealized, unshaped first Thin Lizzy LP and you'll be in the right hookah lounge. —Matt Seward (Mighty Mouth Music, almostreadyrecords)

PAUL MESSIS: *Songs of Our Times*: LP

Paul Mesis runs the gambit of '60s style, doing solo albums and playing in two bands: The Suburban Homes and The Higher State. Each outfit is indispensable to fans of the raw side of '60s garage bands. *Songs of Our Times* is Mesis's third solo album and continues to explore '60s-influenced harmonies over dryly distorted guitars. "Societies Games" turns up the distortion a bit with a fuzz groove. Recorded over analog equipment, the high distortion creates great early blowout din for a melodic keyboard to rise. "Apathy's Callin'" shows Mesis's range, performing with an acoustic guitar with minimal accompaniment. The song highlights his exceptional folk sensibilities. A common trap for some current retro '60s bands is to let lazy riffs pass, presumably because they sound "old." Mesis is prolific and refreshingly pro at creating a range of music that would be at home on the Teenage Shutdown comps. —Billups Allen (13 O'Clock)

PERFUME-V:

Bless, Bless, Bless, Bless: CS

The opening track signals that this is gonna get weird: a lo-fi bedroom pop refrain suddenly bursts into a blast of violent noise halfway through, only to flip back thirty seconds later and finish the last few phrases as if nothing happened. The rest of the tape spends a lot of time in the territories of Ovensesque offbeat pop punk (dueling guitar solos included) and understated, ironic indie rock à la Guided By Voices. Vocals are delivered in a deadpan off-key drawl; the tonelessness is a little jarring to me, at least when paired with music as tight and catchy as this, but someone more into Pavement than I am would almost certainly be pumped on this. —Indiana Laub (Reflective Tapes, reflectivetapesdiy@gmail.com, reflectivetapes.storenvy.com)

PERPETUATED: *Cursed Earth*: CS

Cassettes are a great format for metal. There's nothing better than an earnest demo. Washington D.C.'s Perpetuated have made an excellent five-song demo outside of the bloat and attitude of the metal scene. The tape delivers apocalyptic themes with excellent growl, first-rate chromatic grind, and solid album art. "Skinwalking Terror" walks the line, displaying brutal death metal riffs with classic thrash sensibilities thrown in. And so the tape continues. It's a good band to look out for if you're into Earache-style brutality at punk-ethos prices. —Billups Allen (Born Dead, borndeadrecords.net)

PRETTY HURTS: *Self-titled*: LP

A bit driving and a bit noisy, Pretty Hurts are serving up German punk rock with that American big rig bass sound and a tension that never breaks. Sparse, reverbed-out guitar give it that '80s darkness, a little surf, and a little Satan, you know? But like a sexy HBO-inspired Satan with good hair and a record collection packed with original pressing SST stuff, not gross like some greasy *Unsolved Mysteries* extra. Paint your nails black, dig that Powell Peralta out of storage, and give this baby a spin. —Candace Hansen (Rockstar)

PROTESTERA: *Pengarna Eller Livet*: CD

Swedish anarcho punk with female/male dual vocals. They rarely reach beyond gallop-speed, and the songs are at times a bit longer than's good for 'em, but on the whole things stay consistently engaging throughout. —Jimmy Alvarado (Halvfabrikat)

PROTO IDIOT: *Leisure Opportunity*: CD

The opening track is weird enough to grab my attention. There are full stops that deliver super awkward notes that make no sense. It's clear they're having fun and aren't afraid to get ridiculous while divulging into thought-out song structures that switch from fuzzy to clean abruptly. There are a variety of styles from one song to the next (and sometimes during the same song) that keeps me guessing and giggling at times. Two singers offset each other in



interesting ways. I like this kind of ADD mashup style, but sometimes there's such a cool section of a song that only happens once which I wish was expanded on. The second half of the record stays a longer-on-each-song idea which is a good counter to the unstructured first half, but again, the contrast keeps it fresh. —Sal Go (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

RAD / CROISSANTS: Split: 7"

Sacramento bands Rad and The Croissants (spelled Xants on this album, which actually looks really cool) released this sweet split that goes together really well. The Croissants side has three songs and is a little mellower, fun, skateboard stoner punk. "Don't Play Cool" is a song that is about not playing cool and pretending to be someone's friend. I get it, those people are the worst. "Everyone's a Rocker" is a slower song with heavier riffs and talks about everyone being a rocker and having a problem. "Attraction to the Mainstream" is upbeat and has really awesome fast drums and some great upbeat guitar. The Rad side is packed with energetic hardcore and lives up to the rad namesake, because it's so good. They fit eleven songs onto their side, and include song titles like, "Asshole Apologist," "Twins 2: The Movie (The Soundtrack)," "Gender Neutral Cussing." The song titles rule, and so does this band. —Cynthia Pinedo (Sacramento)

RAGING NATHANS: Cheap Fame: LP

It's been almost two years since I got to review the Nathans' first full length and try to coin the descriptive term "boom jangle." Within the first few spins of *Cheap Fame*, it becomes apparent the band has spent that time honing their song craft preparing this batch of ragers. There are too many bands out there that can ape a sound because $1+1=2$ is easy. *Cheap Fame* and the Nathans' differential is built on their ability to work the algebraic intervals of [(hooks) leads] boom jangle = x. You'll know every word and be able to air guitar every lead by the time the weather turns warmer if you grab a copy now. You might even pass Algebra II with a D+ (if you're lucky like me). —Matt Seward (Rad Girlfriend, radgirlfriendrecords.com)

RAT FANCY: Suck a Lemon: LP

Riot grrrl-inspired bubble gum indie pop with a bit of a melancholy undertone. Cute synths give just a bit of that Tegan And Sara *So Jealous* taste and provides nice interplay with guitar and drums. This album is reminiscent of the sonic feeling of young love and heartache from the late '90s / early 2000s—think the *But I'm a Cheerleader* soundtrack, or the potential *She's All That* could have had if a riot grrrl had scored it. The B side of the record is a bit more brooding and bass-heavy, providing a nice contrast from the more straight forward pop on side A. I'm really excited to see what comes out of this band in the future.

Also, the line, "I'd rather suck a lemon than talk to you" reminded me to take my vitamin C. Thanks Rat Fancy! —Candace Hansen (HHBTM)

RAZOR BOYS: 1978: LP

Sleazy gutter-level glam punk from 1978 Atlanta, of all places. The swaggering riffs are just dripping with grime, bridging a fine line between punk and rock, Dolls and Hanoi Rocks. HoZac's plucked another gem outta the dungheap of time with this one. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac, hozacrecords.com)

RAZZ: Time Frames: LP

Things start off with a nice bit of power pop via Ramones, not unlike a cleaner-sounding take of that golden vein the Denton Mafia (Marked Men, Radioactivity, et. al) mine to such great effect. From there, however, it's off to full-on power pop land, with strummy guitars, some of them acoustic, and hooks so sweet you gotta be wary of hyperglycemia. —Jimmy Alvarado (Emotional Response)

REIZ: Self-titled: LP

Reiz are a pretty cool, '77-inspired, punky garage rock band from Germany who give me a little Johnny Thunders and a little Fidler. Sometimes they are fast, like Euro skate punk, and other times they are straight-ahead rock with Hives-style vocals. Some of the titles of their songs are in English like "Cool" (which has a reference to their band name in it), "Smooth Joe," and "Sex," but the songs are in German.

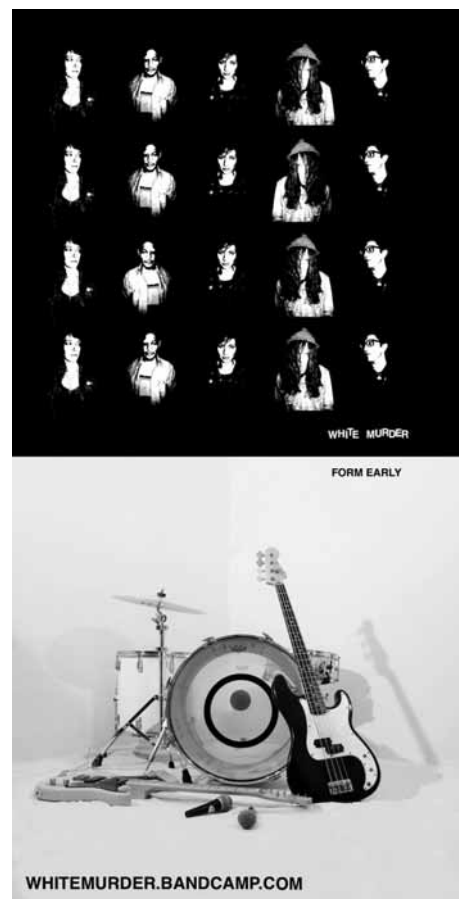
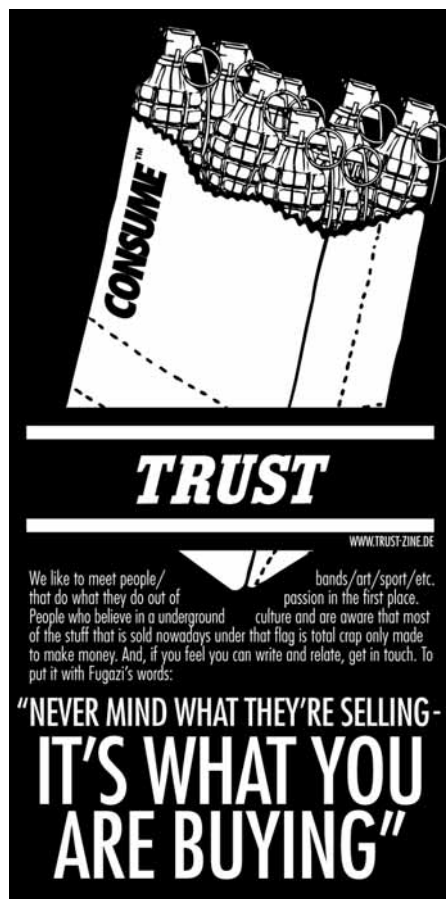
Sounds great. I wish I understood German so I could understand what they're saying. There is a cool, freaky drawing of a Sasquatch playing a flute that looks like a baguette that anyone can enjoy! —Candace Hansen (Spastic Fantastic, spasticfantastic.bandcamp.com / Kink, kink-records.de / Pifia, pifiarecords.bandcamp.com, pifia.records@gmail.com)

REIZ: Self-titled: LP

While I don't understand any of the lyrics, this band from Mannheim, Germany totally rocks. If you like your punk super dancey with a side of snotty, à la The Briefs, Uranium Club, and Marked Men, this is the cup of tea for you. The record is mixed in a way that allows the rumbly bass to carry through over some catchy minor chord progressions and the snappy thuds of the drums. I really enjoy the track "D.B.I."—as it's a slower pace and a bit droney but still has a hint of power pop to it. The closing song has a bit of a ska groove starting out, and includes what sounds like a theremin or keyboard at the bridge. Right after I listened to this, I went straight to their bandcamp to check out what else they have. So far, it's just a demo and this—both of which are fantastic. —Kayla Greet (Spastic Fantastic / Kink / Pifia)

RIK & THE PIGS: Blue Jean Queen: 7"

Ingeniously stupid, kick-up-thy-heels punky garage rock'n'roll the likes of which I can't recall seeing around for a while. The finely tuned turns



of lyrical phraseology meet with my scholarly approval ("getting an evil stare like Sonny from Cher"—*Author! Author!*), but the breathy tenor sax tootings don't really add much to the band's cavortings, other than reminding me of Vale Of Tears, who are hardly the kind of reference one'd imagine this sextet was intending to pull up. That said, when Rik exhorts me to "put the Beatles in a jar, smash them like a guitar," I find myself uncontrollably compelled to solve the associated logistical boondoggles preventing me from doing so. The B side is slow and weird. **BEST SONG:** "Blue Jean Queen." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Off On." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Run-off grooves read "SONGS IN THE KEY OF A" and "I LOVE LACEY." —Rev. Nørb (Feel It)

ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT:
Return to Monkey Island: 7"

I may have given up hope that this day would actually come, but here we are. For the first time since 2002, Rocket From The Crypt have released new, original songs. Having been a rabid fan of the band for a quarter century now, I have often dreamed of the day and what it would sound like. Well, it sounds like RFTC of course! Heavy, full-sounding riff rock with a punk edge and pop sensibilities hiding just below the rough exterior. All hail the Rocket Men! The record itself is a nice picture disc, and as with most RFTC singles, is already impossible

to get your hands on. Now if only they'd stop releasing U.K.-only tour records and get down to business on a new LP, then all would be right in the world. Do you hear me, Speedo? This shit world needs something to dance to! —Ty Stranglehold (Rocket From The Crypt, rftc.com)

RULER: Self-titled 7"

We throw around the term "supergroup" a bit loosely by referring to any band with members that were in previous bands as a supergroup. But how else can you describe a band comprised of members of Teengenerate, Young Ones, Raydios, Triple Junk, and Intimate Fags? Marvelously simple, yet with that cut-above end result that Teengenerate's Fink is known for; everything about this single is perfect. The backing vocals, strategically placed low in the mix, are particularly fabulous. Find this record while you still can! —Art Ettinger (Secret Mission)

RULER: Self-titled: 7"

This single contains two buzz saw rippers from Fink of Teengenerate and members with high punk pedigree. It's difficult not to compare it to Teengenerate, but if you pine for the Teengenerate sound, Fink waves the flag once in a while without disappointing. This single is no different; both songs are overdriven smashers. 'Nuff said. Hopefully they'll make an album. —Billups Allen (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

SBSM: *Leave Your Body: CS*

I literally gasped when I pulled this cassette out of my review box. SBSM are hands down one of my favorite bands I've ever seen but know little about. I saw them at a house party in Oakland in spring of 2016, and had a difficult time finding recordings online. The label aptly describes them as tender yet destructive. *Leave Your Body* starts with experimental industrial sounds set to pounding, tom-heavy beats before moving into grind that sounds like you're listening from behind a cyber wall. Makes you wonder if you're intruding on something you shouldn't be hearing. Vocals often sound trapped—in a tornado or another realm—a beautiful audible metaphor for much of the lyrical content about strength despite enclosures, physical or otherwise. The drums move, finding beauty and groove in irregularity. Sometimes synths create a sonic bed for screams and other times they sound like scorpions and fire, traveling low and fast, contemplative and remorseless. Sometimes they are drills and hammers, sonic gates, and portals. Feedback carries prayers like sage into the great sonic unknown. I wanna say if you don't get it, it's not for you, but I don't even know if it's for me. Incredible. —Candace Hansen (Remote Outposts)

SCREAM: *NMC 17: LP*

Originally released on RAS Records in 1988. (Why not Dischord? The world may never know.) Remixed and

remastered by Franz Stahl, it packs more of a punch and some of the overused '80s studio tricks were toned down. Track listing shuffled here and a couple extra songs are included (one really is just the full version). Love the booklet inside. Does Skeeter still owe the band \$9.79? I'm biased since I have shared the stage with this band twice. But trust me that this will get frequent spins if you pick it up. —Sean Koepenick (Southern Lord, info@southernlord.com)

SLEEPING BAG: *Wet: CS*

Sleeping Bag's sound is a mix of eerie synth pop, 1980s experimental alternative, and toned-down alt rock. It's great to listen to sitting in the dark. It will not work so well on a bright, sunny day replete with flowers and puppies. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Let's Pretend)

SLOW WOW: *Beneath: 12"*

Just four songs on this one-sided 12", but they're more than worth the vinyl. Slow Wow plays dark, brooding punk a little reminiscent of X, The Gun Club, or maybe 45 Grave. It's not that anything about this is particularly twangy, or even very gothy, but something about the echoing vocals and searing guitars makes it easy to picture black dusters and lonesome highways... maybe some dusky cactus silhouettes against the desert sky? Jenn Archerd's vocals are the highlight of this for me—in this context, the easiest comparison may be to Exene, but there's a lot



more there that I can't quite place. Unique and powerful in such a cool way, not unlike the frontwomen of Looming and Screaming Females. I hope (and expect) to start hearing more about this band. —Indiana Laub (Carbonated Sounds)

SMD: *Born Against*: LP

Hard to get the noggin around the fact that these cats have been around for nearly thirty years, yet here they are, still as uncompromising and as crazed as ever. Things start off with a Slayeresque intro before sharp-turning into manic, metallic hyper-thrash more akin to Pig Children or maybe Cryptic Slaughter. Topical and unrelenting throughout, these cats remain the real deal and this comes highly recommended. —Jimmy Alvarado (Poor Kids, facebook.com/PoorKidsRecords)

SONGS FOR SNAKES / IF IT KILLS YOU: Split: 7"

Songs For Snakes: Even without the umlauts and Hüscher Dü font on their logo, it would be hard not to peg this beefy, driving punk as Bob Mould worship. A little Naked Raygun, too. Obvious *Candy Apple* Grey-ness aside, it's a terrific song with huge guitars and constant forward motion. If It Kills You: Grooving, slightly mathy post-hardcore with strong melodies, tight playing, and a nice chug to it. Like an emo'd out Quicksand. One song from each of these California bands, and I want to hear more. —Chris Terry (songsforsnakes.bandcamp.com)

SPIT-TAKE: *Frog Rock*: LP

Spit-Take does something really neat with a style that's hard to get really right. *Frog Rock* undeniably invites comparison to the classics of college indie rock (read: Superchunk and Archers Of Loaf), and to the hyper-earnest energy of powerpop punk bands like Delay, but I don't know if I'd say Spit-Take really *sounds like* any of those bands. Most of the songs are short, hanging in the air just long enough to give a glimpse of a hook before moving on to the next one. The band seems just as comfortable turning out moody jams like "Stars Don't" as banging through bouncy rock tunes like "Chapel St" and "Awful Long." The best tracks do a little of both—"Ear" is an instant heartbreaker. Seriously, the songwriting on this record rules. Somehow so many of the melodies feel unexpected but comfortingly familiar. I was already feeling nostalgic for this album the first time I listened to it. —Indiana Laub (Ice Age, theiceageiscoming.net, kris@theiceageiscoming.net / Cat Dead Details Later, catdead.storenvy.com / One Percent Press, onepcentpress.tumblr.com / Shitty Present, vaguedan@hotmail.com, theshittypresent.tumblr.com)

SQUISHERS: *Too Damn Careless*: LP

Rymodee's voice is immediately recognizable here, even as my experience with This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb consists of a single basement show and a few 7"s. Still, nostalgia can

be suffocating, and Squishers are a new beast and more than hold their own here. With *Too Damn Careless*, they've crafted a full length of sturdy, earnest, heartfelt songs, and gems like "Filthy Clean Future" and "Triple Threat" strut and holler with a yearning that's both immediately familiar and timeless. There are still threads of folk punk running through this, but it mostly falls under that larger and simpler umbrella of protest music, in the way that the personal is the political, and how the quiet moments in a life inform us as much as the loud, brash ones. I wonder if a lot of people are gonna be turned off by the band name and the cover art, but if they make it past that, they're in for something special. Like I said, Squishers is a new band, but in the same way that San Francisco stalwart Shotwell does, they really embody the scrappiness and long-running resilience of punk. Nice job. —Keith Rosson (Squishfund)

STRESS RELIEF: *Losing / Failing*: 7"

Hardcore with povviolence leanings bringing to mind the very underrated No Dice 7". The band cites No Comment, Crossed Out, and Infest as influences and that comes across clearly. Brevity, ferocity, and distaste for shit humans is the name of the game and a one-sided 7" is the perfect way to deliver eight songs in under five minutes. The covers were put together by hand, so you know this is a DIY product through and through. —Juan Espinosa (Forever Never Ends, stressxrelief.bandcamp.com)

SUBURBAN HOMES, THE:

"Unemployed" b/w "Anxiety Attack": 7"

This fantastically lo-fi single from The Suburban Homes from West Sussex, U.K. demonstrates why recording on tape at home is often still the best way to go. This single sold out quickly, but might still be floating around from some distros. Quintessential garage punk that is not to be missed; the super distorted guitars and keyed-down drums won't disappoint. The single comes in a pretty, homemade stamped sleeve, too. I'm digging it. —Art Ettinger (Total Punk)

SURFBORT: Self-titled: 7" EP

Hardcore with an odd early New York feel, more No Thanks and Beastie Boys than, say, Cause For Alarm. The guitars occasionally have a bit more texture to them than the simple structures and largely sloppy delivery may imply—and it sounds as if the responsible parties are enjoying themselves, making all the racket here. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac, hozarecords.com)

SUSPECT PARTS: Self-titled: LP

Didn't this lot have records out a decade ago? Sure did, same band. Power pop supergroup featuring folks from the Briefs, Clorox Girls, and Red Dons amongst others should be enough of a sell. If the resume doesn't do it, the tracks alone will be taste test enough. Sounds like this lot have spent the months on tour mining the Undertones, Rudi, Knack, Beach Boys, and Kinks

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back catalogues for songwriting tips. Just enough sugar, just enough spice; this fucker could have come out in any of the past four decades. Some of the songs could have been lifted off an unheard goddamn Beach Boys album. Tight as a gnat's bum and soft as a velvet pillow, this shit should be at the front of anyone currently putting together a mix tape for potential girlfriends/boyfriends. —Tim Brooks (Oops Baby, oopsbabyrecords.com)

SWEAT SHOPPE:

The Future Is a Made Up Mind: CD

The good folks at Encapsulated Records have become my new favorite purveyors of rock'n'roll annihilation, and Sweat Shoppe lives up to that standard. They play fiery punk rock that sounds at least partly inspired by the ingestion of lots of amphetamines. The point is, Sweat Shoppe gets the blood boiling. They remind me a lot of Negative Approach, only not dripping with aggro as much. Great stuff, and well worth my time. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Encapsulated)

SWEET KNIVES: "Burnt Sienna Blues" b/w "I Don't Wanna See": 7"

The A side reminds me of the occasional female-fronted 45 upon which a modestly tuned-in cat might occasionally stumble circa 1981, when things were coming out of the tailwinds of the original punk blast, picking up a little new wave keyboard damage along the way, keeping the energy pleasantly high and the budgets pleasantly low,

and essentially maintaining earth's punky momentum until hardcore could horn in. The B side is a slower, more downbeat psychedelic pop jangler that I'm sure Greg Shaw would have loved to do terrible things with. I should wish it to be known that I am moderately intrigued. **BEST SONG AND SONG TITLE:** "Burnt Sienna Blues." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** This band features Alicja Pop on vocals, but that is not so much a trivia fact as a late observation. —Rev. Nørb (Red Lounge)

SWEET KNIVES: "Sound on Sound" b/w "Strange Animals": 7"

Synth-driven post-punk with an industrial edge. "Sound on Sound" lurches between roaring punk instrumentals and sparse, nearly stage-whispered verses. The B-side is more even-tempered, a minimalist dirge built around a simple synth line that gradually starts to swell with fuzzed-out bass. This is the latest evolution of a project from Jay Reatard's former Lost Sounds bandmates, so fans of his discography are likely to find something recognizable in the reverberated strangeness herein. —Indiana Laub (Red Lounge)

SYMBOL SIX: *Side Four: LP*

Symbol Six formed in the early '80s in Los Angeles, broke up, and then reformed in this millennium. This is their fourth album since getting back together. Enjoyably stagey, with a tasteful attempt at a wall of sound in

the production, these guys are focused on tight, hook-laden songwriting. There are lead guitar lines, but never to an obnoxious extent. Inspired more by early bands like The Dictators than anything that came since, Symbol Six is keeping it basic, yet they're not afraid to let their musical acumen or skill sets take over. It's on colored vinyl, with a neat fold-out lyric sheet included as well. I'm guessing a fifth album will follow in the very near future, which wouldn't be a bad thing at all. —Art Ettinger (Jail House, jailhouserecords.com, storenv.com)

TACO HELL: *Retainer: CS*

Much like the volatility of actually consuming their namesake, Taco Hell swings wildly between roaring, twangy basement boppers and pastoral indie dream pop. And just as you know you're asking for trouble mixing a quesarita and a cheezy gordita crunch wrap, the taste nirvana the moment it hits your tongue is worth any later repercussions. Do they even have Taco Bell in England? Recommended, even though the music on the tape was the wrong release and I had to Bandcamp the tunes. —Matt Seward (Circle House, circlehouserecords.bandcamp)

TARANTULA: *Weird Tales of Radiation and Hate: 7" EP*

Wasn't sure what was gonna come out of the speakers, considering members of Cülo are involved. I was fairly certain it'd be interesting, and it is that, but man, this is definitely a stunner:

primal, a mid-tempo thud-punk rhythm section, guitars laying down sheets of sound that recall Criminal Code, and what sounds like a pro wrestler barking out orders over the top. The whole endeavor is infectious as hell from first-to-last note, with that rare quality that makes ye get up, flip it, and start all over again. And again. Fuck yeah, this rocks. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

TEENAGE HEAD: *Demo 78: LP*

Upon first glance, the record caught my eye because I thought it was a demo from Canada's Teenage Head. It's actually a scarcely known French group's demo and the recordings are mostly covers. It didn't seem essential; some of the covers are even played out. But it's become pretty essential listening. It's a slammer all the way through, including tough, '77 versions of "Shakin' All Over" and "Teenage Depression," to name a few. I can't read French well, but I think the essay included with the LP says some or one of them went on to form the French power pop group Telephone. Or maybe one of them just used a telephone once. That's really only nominal lineage for some people. But if you're a fan of the Canadian band Teenage Head or The Flamin' Groovies' album *Teenage Head*, this won't disappoint. It's solid for the punk'n'roll set. —Billups Allen (Cameleon; rickyamigos.free.fr)

TELEPHONE LOVERS: *Self-titled: LP*

This record is pure mid-'70s, Los Angeles rock'n'roll powerpop

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(remember when that wasn't an oxymoron?) packed up and shipped into present day. Every minute is packed with tight, danceable drumbeats, catchy guitar riffs, and just enough reverb to evoke that retro garage sound. No feeble attempt at imitation, Telephone Lovers is an educated, authentic, and perfectly executed American rock band. You can almost hear the greasy hair and bouncy skirts. It's just *fun*. The album's vintage-style cover is complete with leather jackets, sunglasses, and bubble type. I dare you to listen to this record and *not* tap your foot. It can't be done. —Michelle Kirk (Disconnected, josh@cascaderecordpressing.com, disconnected-records.com)

TERMINAL MIND: *Recordings*: LP

I moved to Texas in 2015 and have been playing catch up with first wave Texas punk since then. I can't afford the originals, so I'm grateful for the archivists reissuing any of this stuff. I was tangentially aware of some bands (Stick Men With Ray Guns, Dicks, Big Boys, Skunks) but the Austin scene didn't get as much spotlight as New York, L.A., or England, so going beyond the big names took some digging. I'd heard about Terminal Mind and found some songs online. When I first caught wind of this long-promised collection, I was pretty excited. Terminal Mind was of the late '70s/early '80s Raul's scene but may have been enough on the margins that the kids weren't calling for reissues. Or at least my friends didn't talk about them that much.

Recordings is a welcome addition to the available, um, recordings of early anywhere punk. Sonic Surgery (imprint of Austin-based Super Secret records) gives a quality reissue: 180 gram vinyl, detailed liner notes, and a few band and flyer pictures. Quality mixes of not only the self-titled EP but live songs too (including one mixed from video.) "I Want to Die Young" is Terminal Mind's Who-like anthem, reflecting the earnest impatience and nihilism of youth. "Zombieland" easily reflects problems we face in any given year. Terminal Mind's sound is more akin to the Skunks than, say, Bobby Sox, and the tunes range from straight forward punkers, to proto punk riffery, to a proto-post punk attempt at sonic swirl. I was fortunate enough to catch a reunion show for the album release. Sole original member/vocalist/bassist (now guitarist) Steve Marsh recruited a solid rhythm section and I wouldn't mind seeing if Terminal Mind does anything new. —Sal Lucci (Sonic Surgery)

TIMESCAPEZERO: *Total War*: CS

Retrospective cassette pressing of this Miami metalcore outfit's sole LP. The band recorded a couple of demos, a 7", and this recording over the course of the '90s. The sound is modern for the time, but has aged better than most recordings from that era as they (either through genius foresight or dumb luck) didn't fall into the trappings of overly compressed recordings or tuff-guy posturing. There's a little more depth to

the lyrical content than most metalcore and the songs show a lot more range than your average Victory Records band from the time. Fans of Ringworm or All Out War take note, though since this is a Finnish pressing limited to fifty copies I imagine it won't be an easy record to track down. —Ian Wise (Judas Chair, judaschaircollective.bandcamp.com)

TONY JONES & THE JERKTONES:

Ubiquitous Postmortem: CD

Tony seems like a nice guy; he even has a link to Razorcake on his website under the "Pals" section. But man, I'd be hard pressed to return the favor after listening to this stinker. What we have here is a five-song CD of rockabilly-ish songs that are seemingly designed to offend with titles like "Large Marge" and "Baby, Are You Dead?" The problem isn't that the material is offensive; the problem is the material is both uninspired and just plain silly at times. —Garrett Barnwell (Cretin, cretinrecords.com)

TOWARD SPACE:

The Bomb That Fell: CD

Fuzzed-out, trashy garage pop with some psych overtones from this Fairfax, Va.-based duo with a +1 drummer. Yet another case of not judging a CD by its cover, I totally thought this would be something different than it ended up being and was pleasantly surprised. The guitarist has a knack for weaving some leadwork that is either in the wrong key or in the least discordant

but yet somehow seems to fit perfectly. Toss in some strong dual lead vocals and things get even more interesting. —Garrett Barnwell (Self-released)

TRASH'T ONES: *Raccoons*: CD

I dug the political and vegetarian messages this Toronto trio espoused in their lyrics. Before listening to Trash't Ones, it had been about twenty years since I had last listened to ska punk with any regularity. *Raccoons* did not do anything to make me want to change that. —Paul J. Comeau (Trash't Ones, trashtones.bandcamp.com).

TRENDEES, THE: *We Are Sonic Art*: LP

I don't know if The Trendees realize how endearing they are. What I'm partly looking for in music is what this band offers: small-towners telling me "the food was not ideal/ at the boring party" and guitar solos that don't necessarily fit the song. They're also melodic, strange, lo-fi, amiable. I guess think very early Pavement or Silver Jews, or Half Japanese, or the more accessible side of Siltbreeze, or just being in a living room. When the master volume went up and then came back down on "Centre of Town," that's when I knew it was real. This record is a little gem. —Matt Werts (Albert's Basement / Melted Ice Cream)

TRÈS OUI:

Singles Going Nowhere: 12" EP

Austin's Très Oui opted to open their first release by letting the bass shine—a decision I both welcome and find

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misleading. After eight seconds of the aforementioned borderline-“funky” bass, the remaining sixteen or so minutes are pure indie pop, complete with hints at some of the best parts of the ‘80s: strong bass, jangly guitars, and shimmering vocals. Listen to on repeat: “Prince of Pop.” Dance to: “Party Planner.” Skip: “Honolulu.” If you can’t catch Belle And Sebastian on their next tour, maybe this will soothe your soul. —Nicole X (Square Of Opposition)

TRIAL BY FIRE: 1982: LP

When Strike Under disbanded, three of the four members reformed as Trial By Fire. For reason unknown, they only lasted a year and played a handful of shows. Chris Bjorklund went on to play in Bloodsport and The Effigies. Bob Furem later joined Da. The man who needs no introduction would be Pierre Keszdy, later joined Naked Raygun and Pegboy. Two songs on this record would later be “covered” by Naked Raygun. One song even was reworked and slapped on an Arsenal record. Now that the history lesson has concluded, it is time for the facts. This record shreds! How this could remain unreleased for so long is a travesty! Get this on vinyl now! The 1981 demo is included as a download with the LP and also on the CD. Crucial. —Sean Koepenick (Alona’s Dream)

TWINDOWS, THE: *Valkyrie 2.0*: CD

Six years ago, I was sent an EP by the band Key Of V, a quirky, indie pop duo,

which featured some very good songs. Unexpectedly, I was contacted by one half of that band, which resulted in me being sent this album from her new band. The Twindows is nothing like Key Of V and has more of a punk/rock feel to it, close to the result of combining Hammerbox and System Of A Down. What remains unaltered are the vocals of Aster Grimm, which are outstanding and range from frail to the roar of a lion. She is aided by a warm, crunchy guitar sound, which adds both depth and an edge to the songs. I was pleased to hear two of the tracks off that Key Of V EP resurface here, both packing more of a punch this time out. A pleasant surprise and an enjoyable listen. —Rich Cocksedge (Self-released, themtwindows@gmail.com)

TWO HOUSES

/ *BREAKMOUTH ANNIE*: Split: 7” EP

Two Houses are slack—Pavement-slack—in their hooks. The first-time-I-read-an-article-about-Dinosaur Jr-and-realized-J-and-Murph-care-as-much-about-soap-operas-as-shredding-slack in their leads. “Teenage Wasteland” even comes complete with an “ooh-oo” that wouldn’t sound out of place next to that one popular Blur song. Smash those puzzle pieces together (don’t care if they don’t fit...SMASH THEM TOGETHER!), top them with lyrics about pills, booze, losing your job and title a song “Tiltwheel in a Cubicle,” and yeah, totally down to hang out with your side of the record. Breakmouth Annie’s side of

the record is adult-style throaty punk tunes. Imagine Restorations, but from early ‘90s Chicago. —Matt Seward (Do What?, dowhatrecords.bandcamp)

UNIT F:

Ecocide: Songs of Dysfunction: CD

Orange County’s Unit F returns with a fourth full-length of mid-tempo, standardized, highly produced punk. They’ve been through some lineup changes, and this album is self-produced. Greg Hetson of Circle Jerks / Bad Religion fame, who previously produced them, was still involved in this album’s mixing. As was the case with their prior releases, the vocals carry the day, with a morose tinge that makes me think of Bonecrusher. If that big label sound isn’t a turnoff for you, Unit F is well worth checking out. —Art Ettinger (Unit F, unitfmusic.com)

UNIT F:

Ecocide: Songs of Dysfunction: CD

I had seen the name of this band for several years, but this is my first time actually hearing them. It’s So Cal punk sounding very much of the region, like a band that would have split a bill with the Fixtures or other Know Records bands. It’s political punk that’s well played. —Mike Frame (Unit F, unitfmusic.com)

UNMANNED BRAIN: Self-titled: EP

Sweden’s Unmanned Brain’s first song “I Stand Down” reminds me of The Futureheads if they had more of a garage rock/punk edge, and

were less refined. The song talks about how time’s up, and it’s time to change. Standing down may be a mix of standing up against what’s wrong and standing your ground on what you believe in. Their namesake track talks about being tired of someone who is shallow, and whose brain they can’t stand. I like that the first two songs are really upbeat and the lyrics are simple but to the point. The third song is slowed down a bit, but still impactful with vocal inflection. This album is stripped-down punk, and after three songs, I want more. The album artwork is gorgeous. The cover features imagery of a mountain side toned down to more black and white hues, but the melted snow lake is super blue. The record features similar artwork on both sides, and I really love when bands do extra details like that. —Cynthia Pinedo (unmannedbrainband@gmail.com, unmannedbrain.bandcamp.com)

UNWELCOME GUESTS:

Anything You Want: LP

Unwelcome Guests hail from my hometown of Buffalo and they sound a lot like The Thermals, with a healthy dose of Jawbreaker thrown in for good measure. The singer utilizes falsetto more than is typical in any subgenre, but that doesn’t come off as eccentric as it might seem. I’m a big fan of ostensibly light bands that have an unmistakable aggressive edge. Unwelcome Guests feel like they could attack at any moment, which is kind of exciting from a fairly gentle group. There’s a subtlety

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to the songs, but they're also instantly engaging. Twenty years ago, they would have been wildly popular in the underground and beyond. Possibly too aggressive for the average indie rocker and too soft for the average punk, it'd be a shame if they got lost in the shuffle of today. *Anything You Want* is the sort of album that makes you go out and seek out the band's entire back catalog. It clutches onto the listener, not letting go. It's truly a class act all around. —Art Ettinger (Dirt Cult)

USELESS ID / TOPSY TURVY'S:

Split: 7" EP

Solid split EP from the other side of the globe, featuring Haifa's Useless ID and Topsy Turvy's from France. The ID tracks are strong and could even be leftovers from their recent session from their LP on Fat. This band is as tight as they come. The flipside's tracks from France are standard but consistent modern American/Fest-style punk. No beating around the bush on this one. Four extremely thick cuts on this slab. —Steve Adamyk (Jerk Off/Ratgirl, jerkoffrecords.com, danceswithpants@yahoo.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Scrap! LP*

Scrap! is a seventeen-track comp featuring six of Japan's best bands of today. Want to sample some of the craziest, catchiest, zaniest punk in the world? Look no further than the groups included here, which are Car Crash, Middle Edge, Black And White, Centipede, Dials, and Loudmouth. Each

band contributes two or three songs, and there's not a dud in the batch. Secret Mission gravitates towards the garage end of Japanese punk, with the songs featured here leaning towards some of the harsher subsets of that category. Diversely pulling from both Eastern and Western punk traditions, a band like Black And White is as inspired by U.K. punk as a band like Dials is to Japanese punk ancestors. This comp is so cool that it almost feels like cheating getting to discover six current Japanese bands that are this rad at once. *Scrap!* is absolutely necessary. —Art Ettinger (Secret Mission)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Scrap! LP*

Six different Japanese garage punk bands contribute three (except Black And White who only did two) songs each. Such a fantastic idea. It's like getting six different EPs from the other side of the world. Purveyors of rawness will enjoy the band selection, but the bands definitely don't all sound the same. Just when I thought comps were totally obsolete this lands on my desk and now I feel like every country needs their own version! While I definitely prefer some bands to others, all these bands are good. If you just pick it up for Middle Edge's "Little Bird 'Zero'" you won't be disappointed! —Daryl (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Synthpunk Fanzine Compilation: CD

Here's a great new comp for fans of synth punk, obviously. I found the cover

art to be on the cheesy side, but that's probably my only negative criticism. All the tracks on here are amazing. Most of them have a lo-fi quality to them, which only makes this kind of music better, in my opinion. Aside from Black Bug and Nervous Gender, I wasn't familiar with any of these bands but was pleasantly surprised with some new ones. Limited to five hundred on mini-CD. —Ryan Nichols (Synthpunk Fanzine, no address listed)

VIBRATORS, THE: *Restless: CDEP*

This three-song CD is pretty cool, with an unfortunate cover of "Hound Dog" that should have been left on the cutting room floor. Aside from that, it's probably a must-pick-up for fans of the band. From my experience, this is a band I've known the name of and seen the patches and shirts for, but never picked up a record or heard a lick about them. This short CD makes me curious about their back catalogue, for sure. The vocals are sharp with straightforward rock'n'roll hooks that could use a little more restraint, but maybe I'm just old. "Restless" has a catchy, head-bobbing chorus. I'd listen to it again. Let's pretend the cover song never happened. —Sal Go (Die Laughing)

VICIOUS CIRCLE: *Born to Destroy: LP*

Somewhat legendary '80s Aussie HC (full disclosure: I have only heard the split with Perdition from '85, though they have a lot of material since) that are swinging for the fence on this new

LP. It's sort of metallic hardcore—sort of like *Dead Yuppies*-era Agnostic Front or all the stuff that was coming out on Bridge 9 a few years ago. This is not to my liking but it's competent and well-recorded, and the lyrics go beyond the "for my family" template this style of music seems to follow so well. If you're looking for raging '80s hardcore this is not where you should look, but if you are into more modern metallic HC then this is right up your alley. —Ian Wise (Not Like You)

VIETNAM HARDCORE:

Call Me a Vampire: 7"

The questionably named Vietnam Hardcore hails from San Diego, and it shows. This EP features driving melodic punk rock accented by intelligible vocals commingling lyrics about monstrosity, American imperialism, and religion. Like if the Descendents got angry about politics instead of making joke rock. There are whoa-ohs. Not my thing, but it might be yours. —Lyle (Diecast)

WAR BISON: *Self-titled: 7" EP*

Heavy duty metallic thrash. The structures are more complex than one usually comes across, and the execution itself is tight, and the whole at times has an East Coast sheen to it. —Jimmy Alvarado (War Bison, dwaynegroth@yahoo.com)

WARBOYS U.S.: *Man Alive!: CDEP*

There is some goddamn riff rock up in this here joint! This album



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IN THE FUTURE: Ghoul Squad Unreleased Pismort LP, Frontside Five LP, Odd Man Out LP,
Clay Wheels LP, Enuf 12", Big Frank Benefit LP, Nine Lives LP, KingFace 12" & more.

New issues of Not Like You Fanzine as well.

www.notlikeyourecords.com

reminds of the late '90s when punk's speed and stripped-down attitude met head-on with classic rock'n'roll guitar riffage. Bands like Electric Frankenstein, Candy Snatchers, and The Dragons immediately come to mind. Warboys U.S. do it without sounding cheesy or becoming a parody. This seriously rocks. Sure, a song about how much he loves being a mechanic may sound silly on paper, but I'll be damned if it doesn't work in my ear holes. —Ty Stranglehold (Mystery School, warboys.bandcamp.com)

WEAK TIES: Self-titled: LP

"I don't want to be a part, I just want to be apart." That lyric alone is worth buying this record. German powerviolence, sung in English, with Ultimate Fighting Championship angst, minus all the testosterone. Not usually my cup of tea, but I'd drink a gallon if it all tasted like this. —Ryan Nichols (Contraszt, info@diyordie.net)

WHIP: Self-titled: 7"

Whip makes frenetic, furious, fast guitar music about hating work, drugs, relationships, and generally being a mess in a messy world. The vocals are especially strong: feminine, shrieky, brash, and unapologetic; they embody the particular disdain that pervades this record. Yet the forceful riffs make the whole thing jam. A very fine listen. —Lyle (Neck Chop)

WHOOPI STICKS:

We Are Spunk: CD-R

Sloppy, angry punk for a sloppy, angry time. I am willing to bet this Boston trio is really fun live. The personal information on their Facebook page says, "We are pro-skateboarding, pro-choice, pro-being nice to people, and anti-religion." That is something I can get behind! —Ty Stranglehold (Whoopi Sticks, whoopisticks.bandcamp.com)

WINDOWSILL, THE: MYOKOM: CD

It's melodic, softcore pop punk, which I'd classify as "pleasant adult punk easy listening." The vocal lead is nasally, they harmonize, and there's that constant, steady tempo that lulls the record to a steady stream of sameness. They have cool punk rock names like Marien Nicotine and Simon Speechless. I wonder how Ivo Backbreaker earned his name. I bet that's a cool story. The name of the album stands for "Make Your Own Kind of Music." It's not my jam, with the single-focused lyrics about girls and sad relationships. This bothers me in its unoriginality, but I said to myself, "I'll give it a pass if English is not their native language." Hey! Turns out they're from the Netherlands and consist of members of the Apers and the Accelerators. Perhaps fans of those bands will appreciate this. —Sal Go (Shield)

WIRMS, THE:

Dig These Four Songs with... 7"

The title says it all. Four songs with The Wirms, and as someone who

loves puns, I get the "dig." "Do the Squirm" is a hard-hitting intro song laced with fun guitar riffs. The singer's voice sounds like George Thorogood with a hint of rockabilly-inspired drawl. I don't mind the yelling in the song. I actually think his yelling voice sounds better. "Land of Milk and Honey" gives me imagery of riding a motorcycle at full speed in the desert, while "Brenda Sue" is a nod to rock'n'roll from the '50s. —Cynthia Pinedo (What's For Breakfast, wfbrecords.com)

YOGURT BRAIN:

The Lemon Tree: 7" EP

This record looks like a bad hardcore EP, shares its name with a fairly well-known folk song, and includes a track whose title is a clear riff on a Dylan song title. I figured that meant I was getting set up for an enchanted evening with a folk-core record (whatever that might be), but the contents are actually something more akin to lo-fi psychedelic twang-pop. It kinda sounds like "Jennifer Juniper"-era Donovan, if Mickie Most didn't have the bread to hire the flutes and strings, and, in point of fact, I think the only reason there's a fuzz guitar in "Freckles" is because they don't know anyone with an oboe. I'll float the possibility that this record might not be everything to everybody. BEST SONG: "Freckles." BEST SONG TITLE: "It Takes a Parade to Laugh and an Asshole to Cry," which one must assume is a goof on Dylan's "It

Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The lemon on the front cover is hand-colored with a yellow highlighter. Also, why is there no lemon yogurt? —Rev. Nørb (Orifice Dorm, yogurtbrain.com)

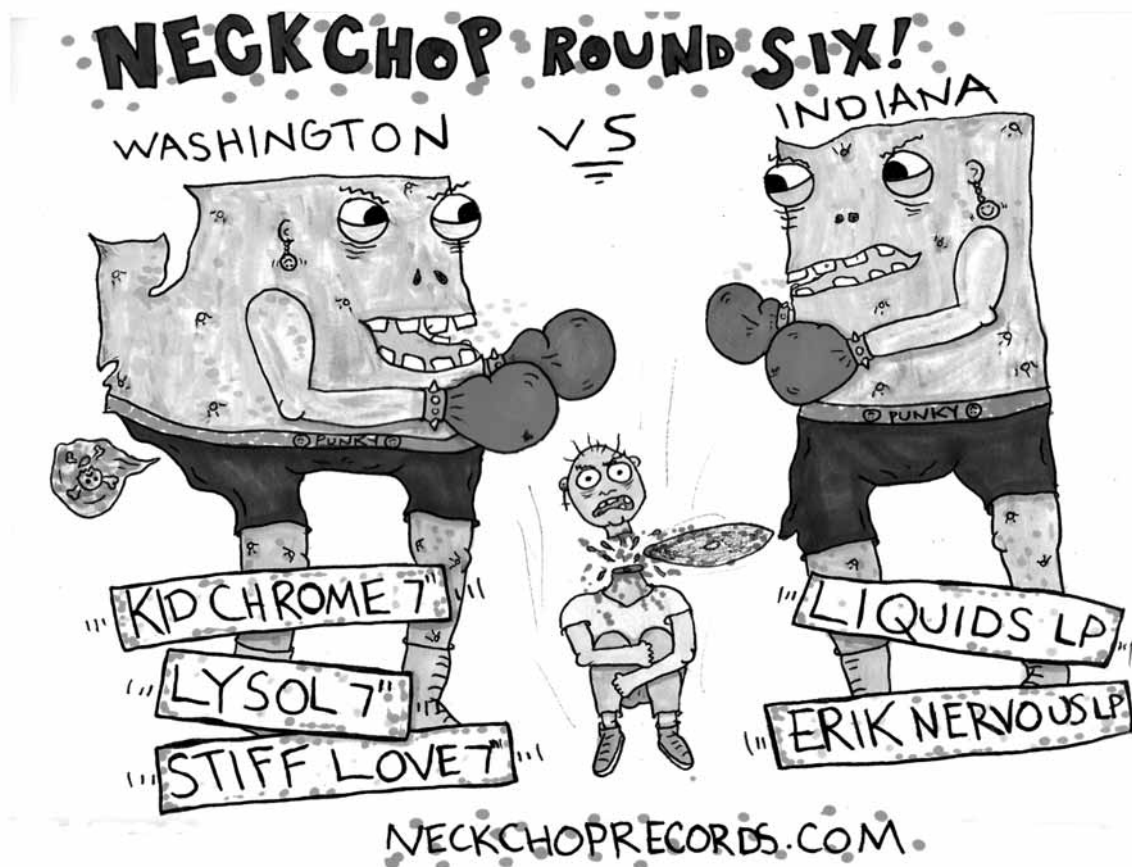
YOUNG LADIES:

Something Simple: 7"

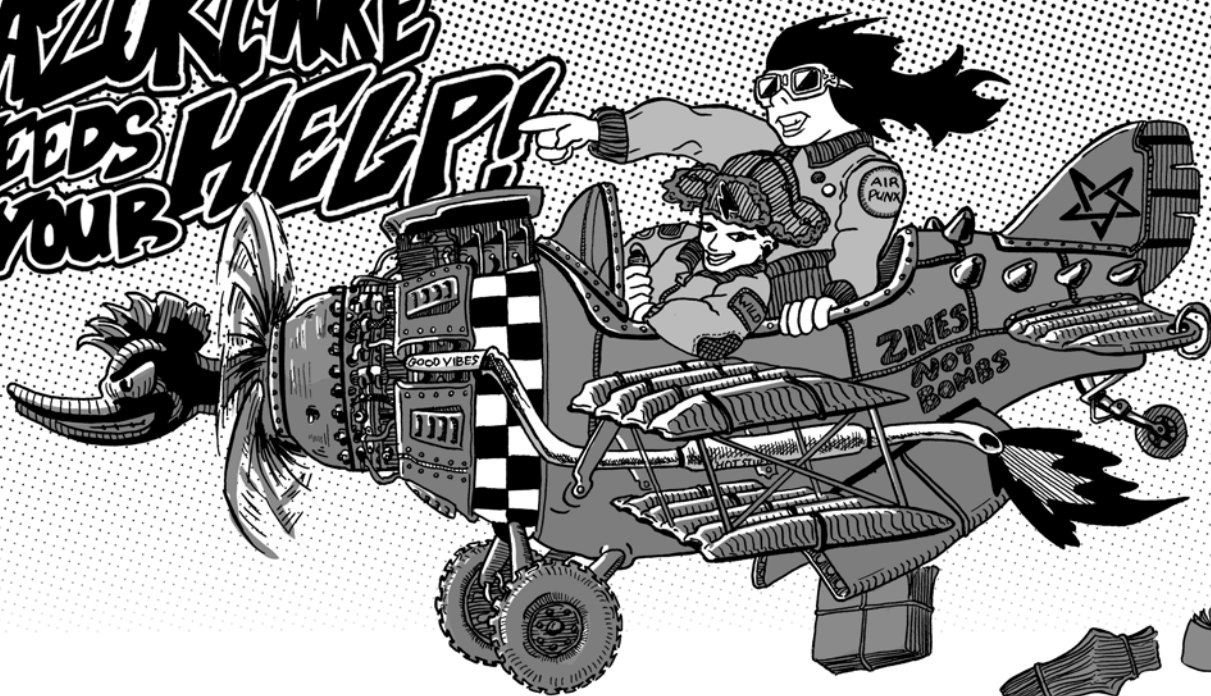
The membership of this group is something that would certainly seem to appeal to the *Razorcake* reader. Members of Discount, Monikers, Bridge And Tunnel, and Latterman put this right in the sweet spot for this mag. Add in the fact that it is released by Dead Broke and you will know what to expect. Sounds a whole lot like a lo-fi Dillinger Four to my ears. Solid songs and playing; if you are a fan, you likely already have this. —Mike Frame (Dead Broke)

ŽEN: Suncani Ljudi: CD

Dreamy and ambient experimental prog-pop and synthwave from Croatia. Effortless, melodic, sun-soaked surf guitar permeates their sound, with pinpoint synthspace sounds that flicker and fall like stars. Like Stereolab, La Luz, and even a bit of The Sea And Cake, an excellent soundtrack to a lazy sunny morning, or when you're trying to fake one. —Camille Reynolds (Moonlee, Voxproject, Unrecords, moonleerecords.com)



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We currently find ourselves at a crossroads where quality independent publishing is more important than ever, yet distribution is at an all time low.

Consumer confidence is verging on consumer cockiness, yet independent zines and labels are shutting down left and right due to lack of support.

We know there are people out there who would totally appreciate Razorcake but don't know it exists. There are so many spaces (such as: bars, community centers, music venues, record stores, book stores, breweries, recording studios, punk houses, tattoo and pizza parlors, any independent enterprise) that would be interested in receiving copies to give out to their customers.

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- **Burger**,
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#A, Fullerton, CA 92831
- **Carbonated Sounds**,
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Reno, NV 89509
- **Cat Dead, Details Later**,
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Newmarket, NH 03857
- **Certified PR**, 6364
3rd Avenue South, St.
Petersburg, FL 33707
- **ColumbusBlood**,
PO Box 15372,
Columbus, OH 43215
- **Dead Broke**, 139 Huber
Ave., Holbrook, NY 11741
- **Deranged**, c/o Gordon
Dufresne, 2700 Lower Rd.,
Roberts Creek, BC V0N
2W4, Canada
- **Die Laughing**,
3639 San Fernando Rd.,
Glendale, CA 91204
- **Diecast**, 427 Redlands St.,
Vista, CA 92083
- **Dirt Cult**,
7930 NE Prescott St.,
Portland, OR 97218

- **Dirtnap**,
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- **Geykido Comet**,
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- **Hellcat**,
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- **Hovercraft** c/o Tim
Janchar, 300 NW 8th #401,
Portland, OR 97209
- **In The Red**, PO Box 5777,
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- **Iron Lung**, PO Box
80172, Seattle, WA 98108

- **Jungle**,
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HA0 1EH, United Kingdom
- **Kink** c/o Ralf Wiedemer,
Alstater Str. 33, 69124
Heidelberg, Germany
- **Let's Pretend**,
PO Box 1663,
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- **Lifer Tapes**,
2201 Kirby Ave.,
Chattanooga, TN 37404
- **Morning Wood**,
Draversdyk 10, 8641WT
Rien, The Netherlands
- **Neck Chop**,
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Fullerton, CA 92838
- **Not Like You**,
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Albuquerque, NM 87106
- **Pirates Press**,
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Emeryville, CA 94608
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Philadelphia, PA 19143
- **Reflective**, c/o Joshua
Hoey, 1963 SE 11th Ave.,
Olympia, WA 98501
- **Remote Outposts**,
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SF, CA, 94140
- **Sabotage**,
PO Box 105824, 28058
Bremen, Germany

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PO Box 691356, San
Antonio, TX 78269-1356
- **Secret Mission**, 135
Central Square, Apt. 6,
Mt. Lebanon, PA 15228
- **Shield**, Blazoenstraat 32,
5021 FM Dilburg,
The Netherlands
- **Sketchballs**, c/o Kyle
Rupnow, 265 Autumn Crest
Ln., Lake Mills, WI 53551
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Reno, NV 89504
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Los Angeles, CA 90028
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St., Richmond, CA 94804
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Landsberger Str. 3, 80339
Munich, Germany
- **To Live A Lie** c/o Will
Butler, 2825 Van Dyke Ave.,
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- **Total Punk**, 1231 Virginia
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- **Vext**, PO Box 27353,
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...the angst of feeling
like an outsider
within outsider
subcultures.

—Indiana Laub
CUL-DE-SAC #7

BODY INSURRECTION, THE,
copied, 8 1/2" x 11", 4 pgs.

A quick burst of an essay on queer body politics with three additional pages of collage. I think you could call this mail art. Go papernet! —Craven Rock (Campaign To Play For Keeps, PO Box 10894, Albany, NY 12201)

CELIBATE SLUT VOL. 2, \$3, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 20 pgs.

Sometimes the motions of grief and pain are hard to swallow, and when we release them, they turn to poetry and art. *Celibate Slut*, part two, reminds me of how someone who shares their most intimate stories publicly can help someone else find solace, or help with the feeling of loneliness. I may not know exactly what Sabrina is personally going through in her grief at the death of her best friend at a young age, but it affected me while reading her words and I may have ruined some pages with some tears while reading it. If you can be affected in such a way by other's emotions printed to paper, then it is important. —Iggy Nicklbottum (Sabrina Dropkick, IG: @sabinadropkick)

CRIES FROM THE GULAG #2-4,

\$1 & S.A.S.E. or trade, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, corner-stapled
A classified list of male and female prisoners seeking correspondence. Some are looking for lovers. Some are looking for pen pals. Some want philosophical and political discourse. However you want to communicate, you'll find some folks who could use your support. —Craven Rock (James N. Dawson, PO Box 950, Spokane, WA 99201)

CUL-DE-SAC #7, \$3, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, 44 pgs.

This zine is the result of the collective efforts of Liz Mason and Julie Halpern, lifelong friends who released the last issue in... the late '90s?? Yes, *Cul-de-sac* apparently began as an outlet for two teen or twenty-something punk kids' pop culture obsessions, including, as we are reminded more than once throughout this new issue, *Grease 2*. It has endured the ravages of the decades and been resurrected to become—well, pretty much the same thing, but now for two punk adults in their forties. This first issue of the twenty-first century is designated "The Adult Geek Issue" and features articles like "Product Review: My Signed David Tennant Postcard" and a two-part essay called "My Dungeons and Dragons Group Broke Up." Not to say that this is just a wacky zine about nerd culture. Both Mason and Halpern are adept at balancing sarcastic and self-aware humor with real, raw-nerved openness, and the odes to Carrie Fisher and *Ancient Aliens* take their places alongside essays about personal tragedy and the angst of feeling like an outsider within outsider subcultures. This is a strong comeback decades in the making, and I would absolutely want to hang out with both of these people. —Indiana Laub (Cul-de-sac, PO Box 477553, Chicago, IL 60647)

DEVIL PLAYS COOL, THE, copied, full-color, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 10 pgs.

In this mini-comic a young girl in hell questions Satan's coolness. "I thought you said Satan was cool!?!!" she ponders aloud to some severed heads on pikes. Satan overhears this challenge, but does he represent? The results are visceral; that's all I'm giving away. —Craven Rock (Facebook: @veek1313, IG: @veek1313)

FLOWERS ZINE #1, \$10, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", color copied, 22 pgs.

I've been drawn to the allure of scrapbooking before, but never really stuck with it. So much beauty can come from this form of crafts, and while I'm not saying this zine is a scrapbook zine, much of how this zine is made and formatted echoes a scrapbook diary. *Flowers* is presented as a straight scan of Lindsey Mejia's personal diary, where she posts her photography work alongside stickers, decorations, interviews with the models, and an actual press-dried flower on the last page. It's even three dimensional, as some of the decorations were placed on the pages of the zine instead of just scanned. It makes the physicality of zines

more tangible. *Flower* is beautiful, and leaves you with a calm sunset as its closer. —Iggy Nicklbottum (Lindsey Mejia, lindsey-mejia.com, flowerszine)

G.P.S.: GHOSTLY PARANORMAL SEANCE, copied, full-color, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 8 pgs.
G.P.S. is a short comic about a haunted GPS that "takes you to all the killer locations." You've been warned! Get your shit break's worth of goofball gore here. —Craven Rock (Facebook: @veek1313, IG: @veek1313)

I EAT YOUR ASS, \$3, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 16 pgs.

Artist Veek's zine is a mix of Kardashian-influenced societal ass fixation, meets going to the club, meets aliens. The title of the zine makes you think what you get is what you see—and you do—but with a twist. A little bit of seduction, a whole lot of alien abduction. This zine had me laughing so much, because the language and imagery are so good. I describe the artistry as that of a K-8 school D.A.R.E. calendar contest winner, which is a compliment. My friends told me this was a vague reference, and they think only my school district did this, but if you saw the images you would get it, and it rules. The characters have enlarged eyes and other features, and it looks to be drawn in a mix of different markers and colored pencil, which really enhances the storyline. —Cynthia Pinedo (Veek, etsy.com/shop/TheVeekBoutique, @veek1313)

LIST FOR LIFE #2, \$2, 4" x 6", copied, 16 pgs.

I remember picking this zine up when I went to my first zine fest. I flipped through it, read some of the numerous lists inside, and I was immediately flushed with a feeling that is kind of like joy, but much brighter, like my heart grew a couple of sizes that day. There are few zines like this which personally make someone happy in a way that no other zine can, and may mean nothing of this sort to others. What brings such joy from this zine is the positivity and optimism that exudes from this zine. List by list, you get a sense of who this zinester is. You sometimes feel like these lists, which range from silly, to cute, to serious, are really just like the essays you'd read in other zines. —Iggy Nicklbottum (Grace B., IG: @sundayschoolkid)

MAGIC WORDS, \$1 or trade, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 10 pgs.

This small ten-page zine reads like someone's senior thesis on the occult, magic, and how they relate to language. To be honest, even though it's a small read, it was difficult for me to get through because of how dense and dry the text was. From what I can gather, the writer wants the reader to reexamine what "reality is" and how there is "no such thing," just different ways in how we perceive it. They then go on to explain that reality is changed on a daily basis through language and communication, and that the origin of words is intertwined with magic. Then there are a lot of quotes and examples of language and the occult throughout history and ancient text; chaos versus order, how to break the "illusion of reality," et cetera. Not sure if I should have read this after an acid trip, or maybe after reading a bunch of existentialist literature? Might have made more sense that way. —Tricia Ramos (Magic Words, PO Box 10894, Albany, NY 12201)

MANCHILD #8, \$?, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", glossy cover, 16 pgs.

Appropriately titled, *Manchild* offers funny and sometimes flat, self-deprecating *MAD* magazine-style comic punk tales with a plethora of dated pop culture references for aging punks. "2018 Auditions for Gregg Ginn's Black Flag!!!" dabbles with the likes of Toonies The Cat (SNL), Beaker (Muppets), and Debby Boone. You can also find some privileged white dude internal conflict with "Butthurt University" that takes a missing stab at political correctness. Also, plentiful takes of stoner rock bands quoting J.D. Salinger. His comics are sharp, sometimes—but not always—on point, and the drawings are skillful and deft. Disclaimer: the audience this is written for is other manchildren. —Camylle Reynolds (To Live A Lie)

MATCHBOOK #4, \$6, 1"x1", 29 pgs.

The fourth in a series of zines housed inside a vintage matchbook. I'm going to get that out of the way because it's the first thing you notice, but this collection has a lot more merit than a gimmick. The first thing to note is the quality of writing is excellent, though hampered a little bit by the format, as there are obvious accommodations to be made when accounting for the size. There are several submissions of poetry and flash prose offset with striking letterpress illustrations. The visual concept lends itself to the idea that depth can be found hiding in innocuous settings, that life is made up of secrets we keep, and the subject matter of the pieces play with that idea without getting boxed in by a central theme. There is an emphasis on colloquialism in several pieces—very personal language that's held close to the heart—evidenced in Patton Halliday Quinn's "Transient," where he says, "I chomped on fish heads round a crawdad cooler..." It puts you in the narrator's head—not their audience—and that is where most of these pieces succeed. The subject matter is personal, from lamenting dead friends to ignoring your own impending mental breakdown, to confronting the voice in your head that calls you a fraud; these are quick flashes of reality you leave hidden in plain sight. —Ian Wise (Small Fires Press, smallfirespress.com)

MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL #415, \$4.99, 8½" x 11", newsprint, 103 pgs.

Maximum Rock'n'roll's 415th(!) issue contains several articles, including an interview with No To Rape Culture PDX, a rad group in Portland that works in the

for an entirely different second pass. A complete joy, and one I look forward to seeing more of. —Michael T. Fournier (smoo.bigcartel.com)

MISHAP #37, \$1 or trade, 5½"ish x 8½"ish, copied, A5, 24 pgs.

Ryan Mishap's been doing this zine for years; thirty-seven issues is nothing to sneeze at. What we've got here is a collection of ruminations on: bird-watching, nature, masculinity, our nation's descent into authoritarianism. It's scattershot with images here and there, cleanly laid-out, and nicely written. While Ryan successfully eschews most of social media, I'm pretty enmeshed in it, and so it's a little disorienting to read his takes on "old" events like Trump's "fire and fury" comments, or last spring's MAX killings here in Portland. Still, Ryan's thoughtfulness and care shine through, and his commitment to zines and zine culture should be lauded. —Keith Rosson (Ryan, PO Box 5841, Eugene, OR 97405)

ORGAN GRINDER #6, \$5, 8½" x 11", glossy magazine, 26 pgs.

Do you miss the days of being a kid going through a *Highlights Magazine* (or maybe *Cricket Magazine*) and doing each and every crossword, puzzle, word seek, and mystery picture? Don't worry, *Organ Grinder* has your adult disorganized mind covered. Filled with goofy and inappropriate humor, the activities contained within this glossy full-color magazine will keep you distracted (hopefully) from all the bull for a short period of time. I tried going

**A lot more merit than a gimmick, these
are quick flashes of reality you leave
hidden in plain sight.**

—Ian Wise | MATCHBOOK #4

punk and hardcore communities to demolish rape culture. There's an interview with Stresshold, a band/project from Russia who firmly believes that "there is no place for homophobia, sexism, racism and other kinds of discrimination," and makes sure to announce it to their audience before each of their shows, which I think is really cool. Stresshold is a band that doesn't have any social media accounts aside from their Bandcamp, and sounds like if G.L.O.S.S. after a day at the beach, so y'all should check them out. The cover story is an interview with Cat Brooks, a co-founder of the Anti-Police Terror Project, a group who works to end violence and state-sanctioned murder against black, brown, and poor people, and to create a sustainable support system community for them. Another one of my favorite things about this issue was the horoscopes by Crystal Mistress. Crystal Mistress calls out every sign in their horoscope, except for Scorpio. I'm pretty sure this person is a Scorpio, because of how much they applaud them, and also because of the snark dished out to everyone else. I thought it was interesting that demos and records are separate, but it does make it easier to look up reviews if you are looking for a certain one. —Cynthia Pinedo (Maximum Rock'n'roll, PO Box 460760, SF, CA, 94146, maximumrocknroll.com)

MINIMUM ROCK + ROLL #6, \$2, 4¼" x 5½", copied, 8 pgs.

Another issue from the best-named zine in DIY. (Apparently, it can also be abbreviated as *mRR*—I love it.) True to that name, this is a minimalist little tidbit of a zine, each word cleanly and painstakingly handwritten in felt tip pen. An interview with Jac Walsh of the band Dump Him takes up almost half the zine (which sounds like a lot, but it's just three questions in as many pages). Jac shares some brief thoughts about the power of queer punk community and the allure of hardcore Blogspots. The remaining pages consist of quick record reviews that skew toward the fuzzier, '90s-influenced indie punk side of things. The reviews are weirdly compelling for blurbs averaging about three sentences; I'm sold on a couple of these bands just based on Josh's enthusiasm. This whole thing is a five-minute read, just a pleasant blip in my day. What's not to like? —Indiana Laub (Minimum Rock + Roll, 1963 SE 11th Ave., Olympia, WA 98501)

MINOR LEAGUES #4, 3 £, 6" x 8½", copied, 80 pgs.

It's not often a zine with liner notes comes across my desk, but the fourth issue of *Minor Leagues* spares no expense. This is a gorgeous issue, with photos, prose, and cartoons so wispy that they gesture rather than point, providing the barest skeleton onto which readers are welcome to graft their own experiences or emotions. Lots of narrative here, relating experiences of youth, but lots of impressions, too: really poetic in presentation even if there's no poetry to be found therein. If you like, reread it with the aforementioned notes, which pinpoint the happenings and make

through all the activities, but there's actually so much crammed on every page that I think it's better as a coffee table magazine that your friends can doodle on or you can look at leisurely. Most jokes contained are political or poke fun at celebrities, popular music, or parody movies. If you actually do finish all the activities, you can go on their website for even more. —Tricia Ramos (Organ Grinder, organgrindermagazine.com)

OUR FUTURE #3, £1.50, 5½" x 8½", copied, 24 pgs.

This issue is dedicated entirely to the Wankys, a band celebrating their ten year anniversary and couched somewhere between noise, hardcore, and powerviolence. It features interviews with previous band members, the head of a label that's put out their records, and an in-depth discussion of their discography. I'm definitely a fan of projects like this—intensive, thorough, clearly crafted with care. Nicely laid out. Band isn't my thing, but there's no refuting that this is very well done. —Keith Rosson (Our Future, ourfuturerecords.bandcamp.com)

POPTWIN PM S/S 2017, for trade, 5½" x 8½", copied, 20 pgs.

Parts comic, parts art dump, and parts fine art, Damien Le's last trade zine is a good mix of sketches: works that didn't fit into any other zines, but are great nonetheless. His work is both intricate and simple—both at the same time and separately—and it's fun to look over his illustrations and enjoy every line. His illustrations are fantasy nudes, and strange body distortions that could make some great framed artwork despite many being unfinished pencil sketches. His first comic in the zine is touching, and makes one think of what we may have missed in the company of others. You think about what was left unsaid, and the implications of what we share, and how it disappears. —Iggy Nicklbottum, (Damien Le, damianle.com)

POST-DEPRESSION BLUES, \$7, 5½" x 8½", copied, 20 pgs.

Delving into the life of punk kids in their day-to-day, or just being so immersed into their world is what I want in every punk zine I encounter. This Allan Cito perzine is a perfect example of what a punk zine should be: immersive, dirty, energetic, personal. It also has what every punk zine has in common: mentioning punk as much as possible. This zine is a collection of essays, short stories, and poems of Alan's personal journey in queer punk love, depression, and self-acceptance, especially in realizing that you're ugly and proud. —Iggy Nicklbottum (Allan Cito, darcycrashdistro.tumblr.com)

PRETEA HANDY ZINE, A, \$?, 3" x 5", copied, 8 pgs.

Much like Azersol, I bleed tea. This super handy guide to tea is great for a quick reference on how tea can be prepared, paired, and sweetened. This is definitely

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for the tea lover in you or your equally obsessed friend. I even learned all about white teas which are more sensitive than I thought. Plus, this guide comes with a bag of tea! Delicious. —Iggy Nicklbottum (Azersol, no address listed)

REBATE MALL, \$2, 5½" x 8½", color copied, 34 pgs.

I've read some of Veek's comics before and like the others this is incredibly bizarre and twisted but not in a horrible way. It's just... weird. It's a color illustrated comic of a postal worker who doesn't like her job and a place called Bates Market. The way it's drawn is very simplistic without much detail or expression on the characters' faces. This makes the whole thing even creepier. Whether that's intentional or not, it's hard to deny it creates a unique revenge comic. —Kurt Morris (facebook.com/veek1313)

RUMLAD #11, €2.50, 4" x 6", copied, 40 pgs.

This is a very simple exploration into Steve's thoughts on all the horror films he watched in October 2017. Each movie gets a page of description and a page of illustration where Steve is drawn as a character from the film. The films aren't well-known blockbusters, but instead include ones such as *Hellraiser 2* and the 1988 version of *The Blob*. Scattered throughout the zine are things that Steve has been listening to throughout the autumn. There's not a lot of content here but Steve's drawings are unique and at times funny, which kept me entertained.

TARANTULA VANIA, \$2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 30 pgs.

Super juvenile and trite, and for these reasons I both think it's charming and hideously droll, *Tarantula Vania* is a tale of classic Dracula with a heavy dose of '80s kitsch horror. Crude in storyline, dialogue, as well as crayola and magic marker drawings, it unfolds in a relatively obvious way. It's charming and endearing, like reading an emo teen goth's angst-ridden notebook. —Camylle Reynolds (IG:@veek1313, FB:@veek1313, Twitter:@fight_that)

THIS GOTH BITCH #2, \$4, 5½" x 8½", copied, 20 pgs.

This Goth Bitch knows what's up in the world of goth, and these handy zines will help you be the best one you can be. *This Goth Bitch* is reminiscent of old gossip magazines you used to get as a teen at 7-Eleven or Circle K, whichever you lived next to. Chock full of great illustrations, hair guides, obscure goth music recommendations, anime, and horror-scope, this zine is a great fun read for any goth, or goth fan. Highly recommended, especially for those sexy horror centerfolds. This issue is Jason Vorhees in all his buff glory. —Iggy Nicklbottum (Michael Vincent Garcia, etsy.com/shop/michaelvincentgarcia)

WORM THAT ATE COSTA MESA, THE, free, copied, 5½" x 8½", 49 pgs.

A goofy, handwritten short story about an occurrence, a happenstance, if you will, where a lowly earthworm struggling for life on the sidewalk gets drenched with

This Allan Cito perzine is a perfect example of what a punk zine should be: immersive, dirty, energetic, personal. It also has what every punk zine has in common: mentioning punk as much as possible.

—Iggy Nicklbottum | POST-DEPRESSION BLUES

However, unless you're a horror film fan or a fan of Steve's work, I'm not sure this will have a wide audience. —Kurt Morris (Steve Larder, 88 Lees Hill St, Nottingham, NG2 4JT, United Kingdom, stvelarder.co.uk)

SHADOW PEOPLE, THE, \$10, 5½" x 8½", copied, 16 pgs.

Augmented reality is not often used, but is super dope, and using it for a zine is quite unique. This cute comic makes something that could be turned into a horror short into something adorable. It's the story of shadows that follow you everywhere, but with a sweet twist. Using your phone, you can make the pages come alive as the shadow people only appear when you use it, and the comic may be a little confusing without it. I wish there were more comics that used augmented reality, since this was such a fun read, and seeing those shadows pop out of the page was immensely entertaining. —Iggy Nicklbottum (Nathaniel Osollo, eyedraugh.com)

SHIT SHOW #3, \$4.99, 5½" x 8½", copied, 26 pgs.

Ah, the power of pulp. This zine edited by John Borges and Matt Pagourg is boasts a stamp for winning the 2016 Bloody Typewriter Award... but the first paragraph of the first story really does not show this excellence. Using "pore" instead of "pour," and missing words are only the beginning of this tragedy of a story. It's so rushed and sloppy, and it honestly made me so angry for finishing it. There's so much to say about this one, but there's no time. Thankfully, this zine was saved by a highly entertaining second story that proves that trash can be poetic, and I thank it for actually having an interesting story, with great writing and wit. There are two other stories here as well, but one is a second part and I have not read the first, and the last one is a bad attempt at political dark comedy. This collection of modern trash pulp may be fifty-fifty but it has some great, weird artwork and centerfolds. I have hope it could be saved in other issues, as we need more pulp in this world. —Iggy Nicklbottum (shitshowpulp.com)

STUPORHERO, \$10, 5½" x 8½", copied zine with CD, 48 pgs.

Mixed art zine with lyrics to each song featured on an included CD. Sugary sweet pop punk songs throughout the CD (digital download code also available). Zine is filled with mini comics, collage pages with lyrics to each song written out, random fake advice columns, and photography. Songs on the CD were a little too clean, polished, and a little too pop punk for me, but the zine and music combo format is a great idea! —Tricia Ramos (Sturporhero, stuporhero@gmail.com, stuporhero.com)

a drunk punk's malt liquor piss and then dusted with PCP a cop skimmed from a bust. For those who don't know, this chemical combination makes harmless worms sprout eyes all over their bodies and grow into Godzilla-sized monsters. This one takes out Costa Mesa. On the envelope this came in, I got a collage and a bit of creative writing on love, showing talent for a little more than genre fiction. Sean is a prisoner, so support him and get his zine. It's listed as free, but send a letter, some stamps, or your own zine to this imaginative, creative soul. —Craven Rock (Mr. Sean Dunne, AN4246 4-130, PO Box 901, Avenal, CA 93204)

XEROGRAPHY DEBT #42, \$4, 5½" x 8½", copied, 72 pgs.

I reviewed issue #41 of *Xerography Debt* for *Razorcake* in 2017 and my thoughts about it remain largely unchanged. There are some columns at the beginning but most don't seem to have any cohesiveness (an exception being Joe Biel's words about autism). Once again, it was great to see contributors from Spain, Germany, Australia, and Turkey. Reading about zines from around the globe is always cool. However, I couldn't help but notice that many of the zines reviewed for this issue were ones done by the other reviewers (or published by Microcosm, which is run by Biel). It sets a tone throughout this issue of it being a closed community. I don't know if *Xerography Debt* doesn't get many zines sent to it for review, but it would be great to see more diversity in their reviews. I'd also suggest breaking down reviews by genre and having them all together with the name of the reviewer afterward. I'm much more interested in what zines are reviewed compared with who reviewed them. For what it's worth, I like the clean look of the layout and appreciate the positive review of issue 98 of *Razorcake*. But there's always room for improvement. —Kurt Morris (leekinginc.com, Davida Gypsy Breier, PO Box 347, Glen Arm, MD 21057)

ZINE CUISINE #1, \$3, 5½" x 8½", copied, 24 pgs.

I think what made this zine edited by Dan Koskie immediately good for me is when an orphan hospital blew up. This zine is a collection of San Fernando Valley artists making comics to share with a common theme in each zine. This one is "Atomic Balsamic" and I don't know what the fuck that means, even after reading the comics. Each one is comedic and has topics ranging from the mushroom aisle at the grocery store, aggression from relationships, to what a giant kanji-fighting-robot pilot does on their off day. There are two other zines in the mix and they're just as entertaining. —Iggy Nicklbottum (etsy.com/shop/DeeCeetheRed)

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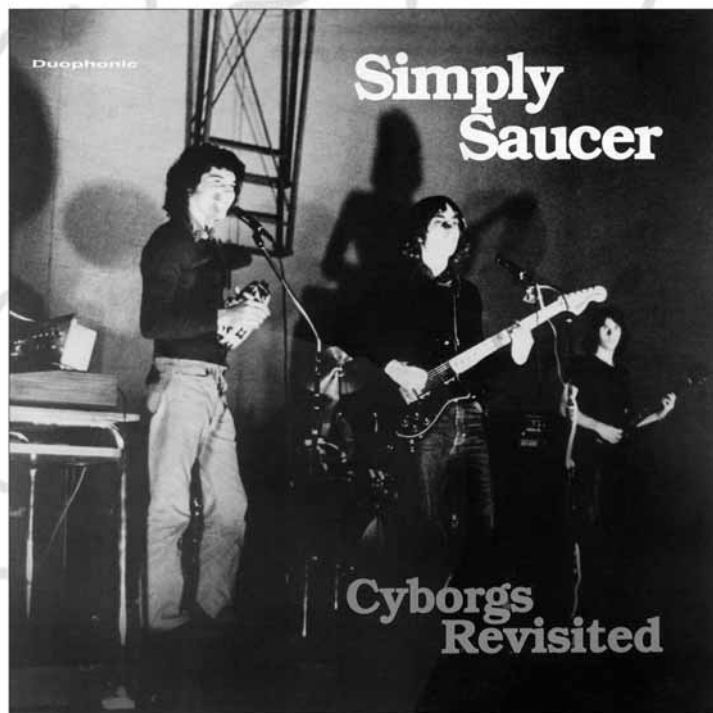
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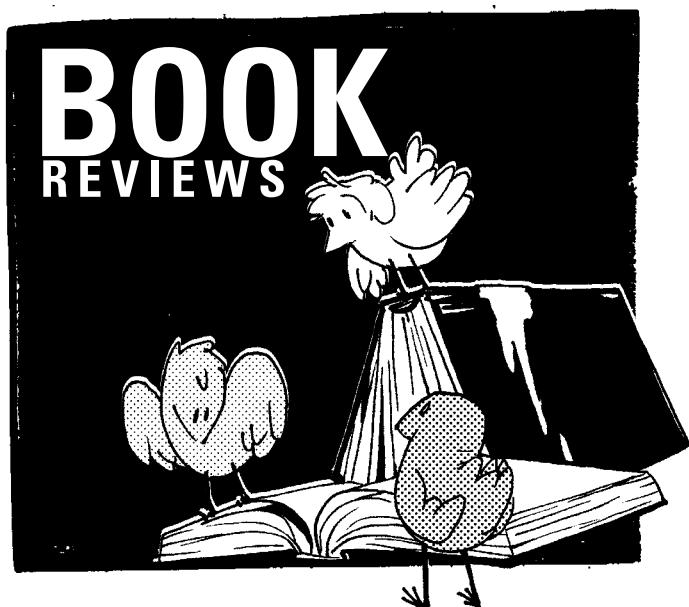
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Frequently Asked Questions about Being Dead

By Wred Fright, 208 pgs.

I met Wred Fright a few summers ago when Mike Faloon and I hit Cleveland on a book tour. Wred's a funny and engaging guy who I've kept in touch with since—my literary broadsheet *Cabildo Quarterly* ran one of his stories, and I dug his novel *the Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus*, which remains one of the truest novels I've ever read about a band. There's no great success to be had, no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, as the Emus grind it out—the success is that they keep doing it *despite* success, like so many of us do in our respective media. Wred knows a collection of people playing music—generating tones at the same time—is at least a little absurd, and runs with the idea.

Job of the Wasp, The

By Colin Winnette, 194 pgs.

In college I took a fiction writing class with a guy whose stories were variations on this: lonely boy goes to a school, is met with hostility from students and at least one faculty member, and is eventually victimized by something like a black mass run by the faculty member, for whom the hostile students act as acolytes. And there may have been a Lovecraftian god-creature in the mix. At some point later, it occurred to me that this was an archetypal narrative that young writers around the world were likely exploring.

This is the essence of Colin Winnette's *The Job of the Wasp*, which is set at a boarding school for orphaned boys. I'm not implying that Winnette is being trite, but rather, regarding this particular narrative, he may be the first writer good enough to get his published.

The Job of the Wasp isn't Lovecraftian, and doesn't feature black masses. What it features is a possibly paranoid narrator who rarely settles for very long on a conclusion about the other characters. The adult reader suspects that many of his conclusions are tortuous adolescent crap, but you're never sure which ones, if any, will turn out to be accurate. I recognized some of the narrator's perceptions as ones that I had in my empathy-free junior high days.

Because of its archetype, the novel has a dream-like quality, and when Winnette has to choose between being a storyteller or a dream constructor, he chooses the latter. The narrator's constant questioning of reality reminded me of Philip K. Dick, as does the way Winnette stops propelling his story in favor of someone talking or thinking at considerable length, the central feature (for me) of Dick's *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*.

I haven't read much young-adult fiction. I know that its readers read mainly for story. But someone trapped in adolescence, just as Winnette's narrator is trapped at the boarding school, might be especially enthralled with this dark dream of a book. —Jim Woster (Soft Skull Press, softskull.com)

Patterns of Reconciliation

By Matt Mauldin, 88 pgs.

Matt Mauldin's old band Car Vs. Driver was always on the periphery of the music my friends and I listened to—I knew the band's name and heard a track here and there (most notably on the excellent

Any work that contains talking stacks of pancakes and penises is absurd, almost by default—but the absurdity works on multiple levels.

—Michael T. Fournier | *Frequently Asked Questions about Being Dead*

Frequently Asked Questions about Being Dead is also an absurd novel—any work that contains talking stacks of pancakes and penises is, almost by default—but the absurdity works on multiple levels. Wred's tale of the afterlife is full of animate objects walking around, asking newly dead folks to fill out consumer questionnaires before they're reassigned back into the universe. In his wry way, Wred is poking fun at the very nature of the afterlife, reminding me of the old Bill Hicks bit where he wonders why we celebrate the crucifixion by telling children a giant rabbit put plastic eggs full of chocolate in baskets. A lot of what passes for normal is what we take for granted—and Wred knows this. He couches his discussion in more absurdity, which loops back to “normal,” whatever that means nowadays. And all this happens before the “question dudes” assigned to giving surveys start to get restless regarding some of heaven's newly minted denizens and decide to revolt.

Even if you're not into tipping sacred cows, *Frequently Asked Questions about Being Dead* is a fun read for its snappy dialogue, which moves with the gag-laden pace of good screenplays, or vaudeville. This book is a trip, well worth checking out. —Michael T. Fournier (wredfright.com)

Whirled Records compilation *Attaining the Supreme*) but I never spent much time with the band. This poetry collection changed that.

Contained in *Patterns of Reconciliation* are poems collected between 1993 and 2017. Some of these first appeared in songs as lyrics, and others were drafted on Mauldin's blog. I was engaged throughout, due in large part to Mauldin's refusal to rest on laurels: he shifts form and tone effortlessly. Some of these poems are fairly narrative in nature, while others are impressionistic in their reliance on sensory detail to convey emotion. Topics vary from specific experiences, friends, thoughts about “the system,” about marriage, to longer, spiritual psychedelic work evocative of Daniel Higgs's stuff.

I know, I know: *poetry ain't punk*, maaaaaan! Whatever. That tired refrain is for people who haven't checked in with the form since being forced to read some Rod McCuen bullshit in high school. Get over yourself and check out Mauldin's stuff, which is deep and wide enough for everyone. —Michael T. Fournier (Robot Enemy Publications, bobrobert.bigcartel.com)

Safety in Numbers: My Journey with L.A. Punk Rock Gangs

By Adam Wilson, 266 pgs.

It's sometimes hard, even for someone involved in punk far enough back to have lived through it, to keep in mind just how different Los

A black and white woodcut-style illustration of a fluffy, round owl. The owl has large, round eyes with prominent pupils and thick, dark eyelids. Its body is covered in dense, textured feathers, and it has a small tuft of feathers on its head. The owl is sitting on two small, webbed feet. The style is reminiscent of a woodcut or linocut, with bold black lines and a high-contrast, textured appearance.

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Angeles punk rock was in the 1980s. While the country's current political climate skews so far right that it makes the "Reagan Revolution" seem like some liberal pipe dream, punk rock is far mellower than the scene's so-called "golden era." I don't mean this in the pejorative—frankly I wholeheartedly prefer being able to see a random gig without having to constantly watch my back—so much as a reminder that things were much, much different then.

When L.A. punk's initial 1970s salvo waned, a leaner, meaner "hardcore" scene developed, one fueled by younger adherents, more frenetic beats, and, for some, a yen to make its predecessor's tongue-in-cheek violence more reality than fantasy. From this petri dish, L.A.'s first major punk gangs arose, and many more followed until things—to my recollection—reached its nadir in the late '80s, and it seemed like everyone at a gig was cliqued up. While a lot of great music and gigs were in the offing, it was also a very fucked up time where people often got hurt

friends were, but rather like a true account of a kid whose life spun wildly out of control. He miraculously made it out the other side. It is a tale worthy of much attention and discussion. Wilson deserves maximum respect for plunging into a subject rife with landmines and managing to pull the hat trick of recounting his journey through one of punk's darker corners without glorifying or trivializing it. Never thought I'd ever say this about a book covering this topic, but this comes highly recommended. —Jimmy Alvarado (Adam Wilson, adwilone93@gmail.com)

Smoke City

By Keith Rosson, 309 pgs.

If you're anything like me, you've probably wondered in the past eighteen months exactly when life became an absurdist novel. Daily, outrages and improbabilities stack higher and threaten to topple. Razorcake

You've probably wondered when life became an absurdist novel... but with perseverance we might be able to get through, to let go of what plagues us like so many "smokes," even though it might not be pretty or tidy.

—Michael T. Fournier | *Smoke City*

for no reason. It was an environment that infused things both with a jolt of adrenaline and a sense that, as the book's title implies, safety might be found in numbers.

As author Adam Wilson points out mid-tome, many of these punk crews didn't fit the stereotypical "gang" definition spoon-fed by film, TV, and lurid news stories: "We weren't raised in Watts or East L.A. We all came from relatively safe neighborhoods in upper Los Angeles.... The reason we were so enamored by street gangs and the ghettos they came from was that we were spoiled, attention-seeking and mirroring. Nothing more, nothing less." Nearly everything he recounts prior reflects this, both in his accounts of angry, fucked up kids doing angry, fucked up, dumb shit and in his descriptions of his younger self and his friends. This mid-point also marks when—like L.A.'s first wave gave way to something darker—his gang "mirroring" devolves into a much grimmer reality of 'hood drama, drugs, violence, and deaths.

Another book by other authors was released a year or two ago, purporting to be about the city's "deadliest" punk gang, by an imprint with a penchant for hyping the lurid and playing fast 'n' loose with factual information. True to form, that book is rife with salacious tales of murder, violence, and factional warring. Despite garnering much attention, closer inspection brings into question the veracity of its accounting—I know from personal experience that one incident it recounts did not happen as described and conversations about the book that have popped up, both personal and on greater social media platforms, indicate that other incidences might not have happened at all and some purported rivalries didn't exist—and its reliance on bravado and an almost celebratory attitude towards the subject matter is disturbing and—rightfully so—controversial.

Unlike that book, *Safety in Numbers* reads more like a true memoir: straight-ahead storytelling, an aversion to the aforementioned bravado almost to the point sometimes being a little overly conciliatory in places (though I wholly understand the intent of Wilson's effort is to dissuade those who might want to interpret things otherwise), and a genuine attempt to unravel what happened and why. A deft sense of "slow burn" plotting which includes the more mundane aspects of gang life adds to a deceptive normalcy that leads down a road where—like the author—readers ultimately, unwittingly find themselves in a world of crazy that seems sudden but—looking back—all the road marks leading there can clearly be seen.

Wilson paints clearly and concisely of a world few are aware, let alone have experienced. Those of us who do know it well will find his vision of it rings true and honest. Any errors that may be found in his words do not feel intentionally mendacious. It doesn't read like yet another blustery brag-fest about how cool and dangerous he and his

contributor Keith Rosson knows this, and mirrors the funhouse in his excellent sophomore novel *Smoke City*.

Check it out: talented artist Michael Vale is stuck working a fast food job after a meteoric rise to fame yields both a crippling drug habit and a fall from painting grace. In the height of his fame, he cheats on his wife. Some years later, she dies young. Vale quits his fast food job, sells his last remaining painting for a fraction of what it's worth, buys a beater, and drives to the funeral. Along the way, Vale picks up hitchhiker Marvin Deitz, who's on a quest of his own. He's the reincarnation of the executioner who killed Joan of Arc. Since setting flame to her pyre, he's lived life in body after body, the predictability of life's rhythms dulling him to the present day. In his current incarnation, Deitz owns a record store stocked with rare jazz records owned by his previous iteration. His landlord, a wannabe Boston gangster, is slated to raze the space Deitz has been renting. It's then that Deitz sees a tabloid show in which a woman claims to be Joan of Arc's reincarnation, and the unlikely of buddy narratives begins.

If all this discussion of reincarnations sounds a little far-fetched, don't worry. It gets weirder: Across the world—particularly in California—a series of human spirits manifest. They jam up traffic as people crowd around to gawk and shoot footage to post onto their feeds. These spirits, dubbed "smokes" by the media, are oblivious to the goings-on of the material plane. That is, until Marvin Deitz engages with one.

Rosson is a gifted writer. Throughout *Smoke City*, he maintains distinct narrative voices, incorporating media reports and journal entries to add heft and credibility to a story that in lesser hands might not pack as much punch, or sound remotely feasible. Beyond the stylistic elements, though, what Rosson does here is create a cast of cantankerous, difficult characters—then he brings readers around to liking them. Marvin Deitz becomes an executioner because it's the family business, and repents his decision for lifetime after lifetime, dying in unjust wars and living normal, humdrum existences. Vale believes the hype about himself and becomes a cliché, throwing away his talent in the process, then selling rights to his work to the highest (and only) bidder for pennies on the dollar, a move that stokes his daily flames of rage. But by the end, I found myself rooting for them both.

If the cast of *Smoke City* can come to terms with what haunts them, than anyone can. That's the message here: that giving up renders us powerless. As improbable as it might seem—any of it or all of it—with perseverance we might be able to get through, to let go of what plagues us like so many smokes, even though it might not be pretty or tidy. It might not sound like much, but I'll take it. And so should you. *Smoke City* is a tour de force. —Michael T. Fournier (Meerkat Press, meerkatpress.com)





Who Is Lydia Loveless?: DVD

"Wearing a white lace dress and drinking a PBR"—Lydia laughs off that this is the way most of her press pieces start out, as she also expresses frustration that this is the image she is constantly boiled down to. This near two hour-long documentary is helmed by Gorman Bechard who is known for making films about The Replacements, Archers Of Loaf, and Grant Hart. Seems right up this mag's alley, right? But when you cut to the core of who Loveless is as an artist, she falls under the self-proclaimed "indie alt-country" umbrella which I don't know that Razorcake particularly prescribes to.

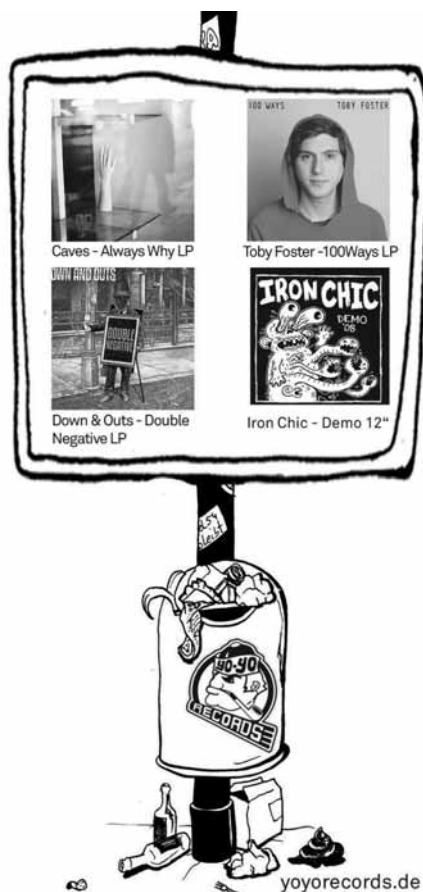
Her story is told by beautifully shot interviews with herself and her four bandmates, one of which is also her husband who she wed at twenty. I personally believe that punk is carried in a person's way of

thinking and viewing the world. What I was left with at the end was that the punk lean that this film tries to convey lies within Loveless's controversial lyrical content (she doesn't shy away from using words like "pussy" or "shit"), as well as a propensity for drinking and imploring a raucousness in her live performances. Though—as far as I could tell through the doc's footage of her shows—is that they close with her writhing around on stage barefoot and/or drunkenly climbing atop the amps and speakers.

I don't mean to completely dismiss this as it regards to punk, as there are several noteworthy conversations she has with her documentarian. Her comments on the monetary value of art, representation of women and sexism in the music industry, an unwillingness to kowtow her lyrics to fit with mainstream radio-friendly audiences, and her aversion to being filmed by cell phones when she's trying to make a connection with the crowd are all wonderful and valid things to explore. On the other hand, topics like the sadness of having to put down her and her husband's dog seem to be a desperate grasp at portraying tragedy in her life.

Lydia shares that she hates when artists reveal a song's meaning only to ruin her own interpretation of it, so she refuses to do the same. Her lyrics are snapshots of love, life, drinking, and some despair, though I would like a peak at the pain behind those inspirations. Show me some struggle of what it's like being so young and making music your fulltime commitment.

My takeaway is that this maybe is not for the audience of this magazine, though if you're interested in a well-shot story of a rising country star with a hell of a voice, take it for a spin. Also I have to say that I was surprised that this documentary has a commentary track. Aren't you already doing that *in* the documentary? I just don't see why one needs another two hours about how the sausage is made. —Kayla Greet (What Were We Thinking Films, 203 Windsor Rd., Pottstown, PA 19464)



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